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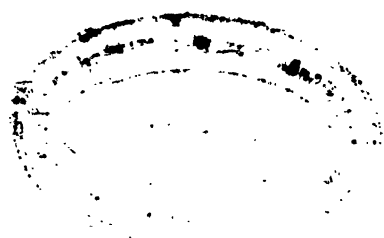
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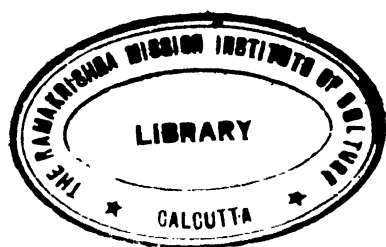
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**THE VICISSITUDES OF  
A LADY - IN - WAITING**







*Portrait of a woman in 18th-century attire*

# THE VICISSITUDES OF A LADY-IN-WAITING

1735-1821 BY EUGENE WELVERT  
TRANSLATED BY LILIAN O'NEILL  
WITH A PHOTOGRAVURE FRONTIS-  
PIECE AND 16 OTHER ILLUSTRATIONS

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## INTRODUCTION

**M**ADAME CAMPAN, whose position as Woman of the Bedchamber to Marie Antoinette placed her beneath the rule of Madame de Noailles, lady-in-waiting to the Queen, has told us what anguish of mind she brought on this "poor lady," when, on a reception day, she tucked up the lappets of her bonnet, whereas etiquette prescribed that they should be worn hanging loose. This anecdote makes one thing very clear . . . Madame Campan was only a waiting-maid. Although she had lived at Court from her very childhood, she had never been able to understand anything about the "honour of being in the Royal service" or, if she ever had an idea of its importance, time, the Revolution and her own fortunes made her forget the wisdom and the greatness of this servitude.

Françoise de Chalus, Countess and eventually, Duchess de Narbonne-Lara, possessed a more exalted mind. Although the heavy hand of Fate fell on her as on all her contemporaries, although the Revolution affected her life far more disastrously than it did that of Madame Campan and brought on her misfortunes that the Queen's former Woman of the Bedchamber was never to know, yet, till her dying day, with unshaken and often heroic steadfastness, she remained faithful to her ideal of what a lady in the service of the Royal family owed to her position.

She had considerable merit, for it was no sinecure to be attached, even as lady-in-waiting, to the Royal



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household. Although they had the honour of being at Court, these noble ladies and gentlemen often had to fulfil the duties of real menials and to attend on princes and princesses that were not always the most accommodating of masters. The two Princesses to whose service Madame de Narbonne was successively attached must have made her feel, more than once, the weight of her chains. On the other hand, without regarding as true portraits the caricatures that have been left to us of "Mesdames Tantes," it is a fact that they very soon formed what may be called the "Old Court" and, consequently, to devote oneself to them was to turn one's back deliberately on fashion, public approval and future prospects.

Madame de Narbonne was the daughter of a lady-in-waiting of the Countess de Toulouse. Her childhood had been spent in a house that was still full of the majesty of the great King,<sup>1</sup> and the customs in vogue at Court had been impressed on her as a second catechism. Therefore, when in her turn she was called to serve the King's<sup>2</sup> daughters, she fully understood her duties and entered upon them with ease and soon fulfilled them with authority. She felt very sure of herself and showed it by her conduct towards her two mistresses; she made them feel confidence in her, and Madame Adélaïde not only trusted her absolutely, but lived in close intimacy with her for forty years. Are we to believe the accusation brought against her by contemporary writers, that she took an unfair advantage of her position? The question must be examined. In the meanwhile it is certain that by all sorts of favours she was amply paid for her services. The benefits showered on Madame de Narbonne will give us much matter to reflect on. However, even before the Revolution, the exigencies of her position at Court brought her to ruin, as was the case with many

<sup>1</sup> Louis XIV.

<sup>2</sup> Louis XV.

other members of the nobility. In spite of its fine appearance the tree was eaten away within, and, when the axe of the Constitutional Assembly felled it, it struck withered branches and decaying roots. This question is also worthy of our attention. We do not mean to make a complete study of the matter, nevertheless, when compared with others of the same kind, the balance-sheet of Madame de Narbonne towards 1789 will help to give us a general idea of the financial position of the aristocracy of France on the eve of the Revolution. When the days of petty Court duties were over, and the hour called for heroic devotedness to a hopeless cause, Madame de Narbonne laid aside her cloak of state and appeared with all the simplicity and nobleness of a true lady-in-waiting. She surrounded her aged mistress, the fallen Princess, with the same care and regard as of yore. She shared with her the bread of exile that was so hard and bitter to them both; and, when death relieved her of her charge, she remained the silent and faithful guardian of her lady's forsaken tomb. If we consider from what a lofty position Madame de Narbonne fell, we shall realize how great her misfortunes were; if we reflect on her heroic devotedness we shall have to admit that all the courtiers of the Old Régime were not base, nor was it always out of cowardice that many of them fled from France. In Madame de Narbonne's life we can study most of the privileges and advantages, the virtues and the failings of the nobility. She is one of the most complete and, consequently, one of the most interesting specimens of that class of society that has been so much discredited.

Although Madame de Narbonne has a prominent place in this book, she does not fill all its pages. In her surroundings we meet many figures that played important parts in history. At one time or another she stepped into the lives of some of these celebrated

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characters and brought about some event that belongs to History, and which but for her influence, might have never taken place or, at least, have had a very different issue. For instance, we shall hear with interest how Madame de Narbonne's action affected the conduct of Madame Adélaïde towards Marie Antoinette, and the Queen's attitude towards Madame du Barry. We shall learn much from the account of Mesdames' departure for Italy and their arrest at Arnay-le-Duc, which was the prologue of Varennes. These chapters, as I have already said, belong to History in general, and, such as they are, we owe them to a great extent to Madame de Narbonne. There is yet another figure that cannot be separated from her when we undertake to relate her life. It is that of her younger son. Fifty years ago an eminent historian expressed the following opinion on Louis de Narbonne. "I do not believe that at the end of the last century nor during the first years of our own times, during these two periods that were so full of extraordinary events and celebrated politicians and warriors, that a man could be found with such a remarkable and cultivated mind, such a generous heart as the Count de Narbonne, minister to Louis XVI. during the Legislative Assembly, and aide-de-camp to the Emperor Napoleon in 1812. No man could be so daring and yet so judicious; no one could be as charming as he was in the ordinary intercourse of life, and none was more capable of doing great things. Fortune, however, did not smile on this wonderful character which, according to the opinion of the best and wisest men of the Empire, according to Daru and Mollien, seemed equal to every emergency. Although she seemed to favour him on some memorable occasions, she then only offered him fatal and hopeless posts where he might reap honour and die a glorious death, but where he could not repair past errors nor avert the inevitable consequences. Moreover,

by condemning him to twenty years of inaction, she inflicted on him the most cruel fate that can befall an eminent man.<sup>1</sup> Whilst Madame de Narbonne persistently draws our attention back to the past, to the Old Régime from which she cannot tear herself away, Count Louis carries us on to the new society of which he was one of the most eager, most hopeful and enthusiastic pioneers. He introduces us to the noble but short-lived band of the Constitutionalists of 1790; and more especially to Madame de Staël, his fervent and intimate friend. His own experiences furnish an endless account of Talleyrand's treachery. Finally, he opens a new horizon to us, as he carries us away in the midst of the glorious days of the Empire, from Wagram to Moscow, from the Congress at Prague to the bastions of Torgau. Whilst tracing the portrait of this remarkable man who was, in many ways so fascinating, I have tried to bring out a trait that was very noticeable, even to his contemporaries, and which strikes us still more forcibly nowadays, namely, that he himself was so at variance with his fate. He always bore the stamp of the "Chevalier d'honneur," the gentleman-in-waiting of the Old Régime, and yet he was the most sincere and devoted follower of the new ideas. This contrast would be incomprehensible if we did not remember whose son he was, and, in the same way, we would only half understand the mother if we did not

<sup>1</sup> Villemain: *Souvenirs contemporains d'histoire et de littérature*, (Paris, 1864, 2nd edition, 2 vols. in 1). First part: Monsieur de Narbonne, p. 1. Villemain was a frequent guest of Monsieur de Narbonne; during the two last years of his life he acted as secretary to the Count and thus gathered together much of the information contained in his biography. He had made various investigations on his own behalf and taken down notes under his dictation. He had also at his disposal the *Memoirs* of the Count de Rambuteau, Narbonne's son-in-law, and various private documents. Although his account sounds rather like a panegyric and is spoilt by long digressions, it is based on very reliable facts and will always be referred to by those who will write about M. de Narbonne.

know her son. They complete each other, and for this reason we have united them in this volume.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> While the following pages were under print I received the proof-sheets of M. C. Stryienski's new book, *Les Filles de Louis XV.*, which had been announced but had not yet appeared. As Madame de Narbonne lived forty years with Madame Adélaïde, the life of this Princess is closely connected with that of her lady-in-waiting and the two biographies are almost identical from 1760 to 1800. The reader must therefore not be astonished if in this volume he comes across new documents or such as are not well known, which M. Stryienski has also used ; for neither of us was aware that we were working on the same ground.

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**THE VICISSITUDES OF  
A LADY-IN-WAITING**



David Baran Mukey -  
1 College Road, Alberta.

# THE VICISSITUDES OF A LADY-IN-WAITING

## CHAPTER I

IN ATTENDANCE ON MADAME INFANTA

**F**RANÇOISE DE CHALUS was the daughter of Gabriel, Lord of Sansac, and Claire de Géraud de Solages, younger sister of Jean François Amable de Chalus, who remained unmarried and was the last of his line. She was born during the night of the 24th February 1734, at the Castle of Chalus, in Auvergne.

Chalus was an ancient keep, rising above the plain on the eastern slope of a hill, five kilometers north-east of St Germain Lembron. This estate had given its name to one of the most ancient families of the province. The Chalus were supposed to descend from Guy d'Auvergne, grandson of Count Bernard I., and their filiation can be traced back to 1179, and, according to others, as far as 964.<sup>1</sup>

Françoise was just fifteen when she was betrothed to Jean François, Count de Narbonne, who was then in command of the regiment of Soissonnais. He was exactly twice her age. The Narbannes were from Spain, and belonged to the family of the ancient counts of Castille. Their sire was Manrique de Lara, who was

<sup>1</sup> *Archives Nationales*, t. 568. (Extract from the baptismal register of Chalus.) J. B. Bouillet, *Nobiliaire d'Auvergne*, vol. ii. p. 81, etc. The arms of the Chalus-Sansac family were chequy, or, and gules.

guardian to some young King of Spain in the twelfth century, and who, on his marriage with the Viscountess de Narbonne, brought her title into his own family. Their arms were "de gueules en plein" and their motto—full of Spanish pride—ran thus: *Nos descendonos de reyes, si no los reyes de nos*.<sup>1</sup> But in spite of their coat-of-arms, their motto and their lineage, the young couple could boast of far more nobility than fortune.<sup>2</sup> They were married according to the written law of the Parliament of Toulouse. The bride declared as her dowry all her present and future possessions, including those that were given her for her wedding. The future husband granted her a life annuity of 3000 francs. Two maiden aunts, Louise and Jeanne de Solages, gave up to Françoise de Chalus all their inheritance, which consisted in a meagre income and their share in a house at Riom, which belonged conjointly to them and the mother of the young girl. The father of the bridegroom gave his son half of all his goods, present and future (of which, however, no mention is made in the marriage settlement), and entailed on him the estate of Aubiac.<sup>3</sup> And this would be all that is to be said about their contract but for a final article that was to give much trouble to Madame de Narbonne later on. In order to secure for his eldest son the possession of half his moveables and real estate, in lands, houses, furniture, and money, the future husband appointed him heir, so that in case of his father's death he might inherit this portion at once.

<sup>1</sup> Saint Allais, *Nobiliare de France*, vol. i. p. 511.

<sup>2</sup> The Count de Narbonne had two brothers and three sisters. His brothers were both obliged to take Holy Orders and one of his sisters became a nun.

<sup>3</sup> Aubiac is now a "commune" in the department of Lot-et-Garonne, situated about twelve kilometers south of Agen. It was then the principal fief of the Viscounts de Narbonne. They always endeavoured to keep it in the possession of the family and, if it had been alienated, to purchase it again.

Immediately after their marriage, Monsieur and Madame de Narbonne were obliged to leave France for Italy, where they both had appointments in the household of the Duke and Duchess of Parma—the Count as groom of the stole, the Countess as lady-in-waiting. The Infante, don Philip, second son of the King of Spain and Elizabeth Farnese, had just taken possession of the duchies of Parma, Piacenze, and Guastella, according to the treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle. Ten years before he had married Louise-Elizabeth of France, eldest daughter of Louis XV. The young Prince knew nothing about politics or war. His nature was lazy, magnificent, and despicable. He was disorderly and extravagant. After having been a docile instrument in his mother's hands, he had become the puppet of his wife, who despised him, and of those about him, who speculated on his weakness.<sup>1</sup> As for the Duchess she was ill-bred like all her sisters. She was afflicted with a skin disease, and was uncommonly stout for her age. She had neither wit, grace, nor brains, nevertheless she was very active and ambitious. She worried herself to death, and spent her time writing to Versailles for money, whilst her household was ruled by the Marquise de Lède.<sup>2</sup>

M. d'Argenson has written dreadful things about Madame de Lède. According to him, no human being could equal her in vice. "As this lady rules everything here, and plunders the Court for her own purposes,"

<sup>1</sup> C. Stryienski, *Le Gendre de Louis XV.* Introduction.

<sup>2</sup> C. Stryienski, *Le Gendre de Louis XV.* Shortly after her marriage, when she was still at Madrid, Madame Infanta is said to have aroused a violent passion in the heart of the Bishop of Rennes, M. de Vauréal, ambassador to Spain. Later on, at Parma, she is supposed to have turned the head of the Marquis de Crussol, who was also acting as Louis XV.'s envoy. Finally, her intimacy with the future Cardinal de Bernis gave rise to reports that, although they may have been ill-founded, were most certainly malevolent. Very little is known about these various intrigues and they seem to be very improbable, as everyone agrees in saying that the Infanta was far from prepossessing.

says he, " M. de Maulevrier (minister of Louis XV.) said that he would inform the Court of France that she was the cause of all the evil. Whereupon she had him poisoned with a cup of coffee, and he died immediately."

This assertion seems rather bold. The Duke de Luynes, who is more judicious, refrains from making any such accusation, nevertheless he is obliged to admit that the lady-in-waiting, who was then fifty, was without any charm, surly, and uncommunicative.<sup>1</sup> Madame de Narbonne spent the first years of her married life under the wing of Madame de Lède. Beneath her stern rule she learnt the duties of Court life, the burden of which she was to bear for half a century. Madame de Lède acted as a mother to the young wife when, on the 28th December 1750, her first child, Philippe-Marie-Innocent Christophe-Jude, was born, six hundred miles away from his relations, amidst strangers and mercenary attendants.

On the 10th February 1752, Madame Henriette, twin sister of Madame Infanta, died. In the first moment of grief, the Duchess of Parma begged for permission to come and mourn with the King, the Queen, and the Royal family. Every year Louis XV. sent her large subsidies to fill up the deficit in her budget, and he now reflected that she might just as well spend these funds in France, and that this arrangement would be to his own advantage.

On the 26th September, the Infanta arrived at Fontainebleau attended only by the French members of her household. Madame de Narbonne was eager to see her mother, to whom she was tenderly attached. She was deprived of the pleasure of meeting her at once because the fatigue of the long journey brought on a miscarriage at Lyons.

The Infanta remained for a whole year in France. She could not make up her mind to leave Versailles for

<sup>1</sup> *Journal and Memoirs of the Marquis d'Argenson*, vol. vi. p. 337. *Memoirs of the Duke de Luynes*, vol. iii. p. 72 ; vol. x. p. 13.



QUELLE ABITUO





Parma. She resumed her rank as daughter of France, following the King everywhere, like a courtier in quest of favours, or spending long hours in conference with the ministers. At last, on the 28th of September 1753, she started, taking with her Madame de Narbonne, but leaving Madame de Lède in France. It was said that her failing health required care, but rumours went about that she had quarrelled with her mistress, and thus been forced to retire before her time. Her disgrace was softened by a pension of 10,000 francs—drawn, not on the Duchy of Parma, as we might suppose, but on the Royal Treasury of France.

The Infanta had, at least, one quality—she loved her family and those around her. She was grateful to Madame de Narbonne for her services, and seemed to become more and more attached to her. She entrusted her with the education of her youngest daughter, Dona Luisa, until a governess was appointed to the little Princess. Judging by these few words drawn from a letter of the Infanta to her husband, we may gather that both mother and child were well satisfied with this arrangement. “It is a fact,” writes the Duchess, “that if Madame de Narbonne were to fall ill, and her pupil be given over to Italians, all the work accomplished would be undone.”

When, in September 1757, the Princess returned to her father's Court, Madame de Narbonne is mentioned as the lady-in-waiting, on whom she imposed all the duties the other attendants shirked.

During the preceding journey, a rumour had been current that the Duchess would not return to Italy. It was said that the King intended to take her away from the Infante, as a daughter who had made an unfortunate marriage, and that he would provide for her at Court as he did for his other unmarried children. Her husband would be allowed to come and see her occasionally at Versailles.

This arrangement would have been very acceptable both to the heart and the purse of Louis XV. However, the first journey had come to an end, and, willingly or unwillingly, the Duchess had returned to her husband in Italy.

Her second stay at the Court of France, which began on the 3rd September 1757, had lasted two years, and we cannot say whether the Duchess would eventually have returned to Parma, for, at the beginning of the winter 1759, she caught small-pox, and died at Versailles on the 6th December at the age of thirty-two.<sup>1</sup>

This event brought to a close the apprenticeship of Madame de Narbonne. These years, which had been mostly spent far away from her country, her friends, and relations, in a small and needy Court, beneath the rule of a capricious princess and a haughty duenna, had indeed been hard, but, nevertheless, they had proved useful, for they had taught Madame de Narbonne how to *serve*.

Our democratic minds find it difficult to understand at present what that word meant in those days. To the old nobility, the King and his family were the symbolic figures of their country. Their service was a religion that had its dogmas, its rites, and its symbols. Truly, many sought their own interests in the practice of this religion, and eventually became renegades, but there were also many saints and martyrs who died for their loyalty.

This religion was taught like the Bible, and there were theologians to expound it. It was an art, and had its virtuosi. "The nobles alone know how to *serve*," said Napoleon, speaking of one of the last of them, who happened to be the favourite son of Madame de Narbonne.

<sup>1</sup> *De Luynes*, vol. xiii. p. 69 ; vol. xvi. p. 233. *D'Argenson*, vol. vii. pp. 137, 310. *De Beauriez, Une Fille de France*, p. 176.

## CHAPTER II

### MADAME ADÉLAÏDE AND MARIE ANTOINETTE

**A**FTER the death of the Infanta, Countess de Narbonne entered the household of Madame Adélaïde, eldest surviving daughter of Louis XV. Madame Adélaïde or, as she was generally called, Madame, is not a mere name in the genealogy of the Bourbons—she is a historical character.

At the end of the reign of Louis XV., and at the beginning of that of his successor, she is thought to have played a somewhat important political part. Without entering into details which do not belong to our subject, it is well to remember that, after the death of her brother the Dauphin (20th December 1760), Madame is supposed to have taken the leadership of the Jesuit party, and to have shown herself hostile to the Austrian alliance. It is also said that she opposed the Duke de Choiseul, her father's minister, and upheld, according to circumstances, his successor, the Duke d'Aiguillon, the Chancellor Maupeou, and Abbé Terray. Later on, when Louis XVI. came to the throne, she is supposed to have tried to act on the mind of the young King, and to have fought against the influence of Marie Antoinette. She succeeded sometimes in her efforts, and sometimes she was defeated, but eventually she had to give up this unequal struggle. She and her sister, Madame Victoire, withdrew to their residence at Bellevue, where they remained up to the first days of the Revolution.

Was Madame Adélaïde really capable of conceiving and executing with the necessary ability such an ambitious

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scheme of domination? Her contemporaries doubt it. Although she was the cleverest of the daughters of Louis XV., many refuse to believe that she was competent to weave the threads of this complicated scheme. Who could be her clever auxiliary? Madame de Narbonne, prompted by interested parties, and above all by the Duke d'Aiguillon, is supposed to have secretly guided the Princess. Nine times out of ten, when we meet the name of Madame Adélaïde in the writings of the time, it is followed by that of Madame de Narbonne, and, invariably when that lady is mentioned, she is called an "intriguing woman."

However much we may wish to consider this title unjustified, the unanimity of hostile testimony is really disconcerting. We might be inclined to give up the idea of defending her, were it not for certain considerations that must never be lost sight of when judging an eighteenth century character. From the death of Louis XIV. up to the Revolution, France was devastated by what may be called an epidemic malady that raged with extraordinary virulence—there was a perfect mania for gossip. Call to mind Saint-Simon, the *Palatine*, d'Argenson, the *Nouvelles à la main* and the *Tree of Cracovia*! This passion for scandal was equalled only by the credulity of the public, so that the more anecdotes were related, the more had to be invented, as the demand far outstripped the production. Everybody was afflicted by this craze, even those whose interest it was to keep clear of gossip—for instance, the ambassadors. Any account drawn from the eighteenth century must, therefore, be carefully studied, so as to distinguish facts from mere gossip, which is the blemish on all these writings. Nor is this all. At the time when Madame de Narbonne began to attract attention, two great parties divided Court and town. Choiseul and Aiguillon both had their friends. As Madame de Narbonne was related to

the house of Aiguillon, she was supposed to be devoted to that clan. The Duke d'Aiguillon was not a favourite on account of his quarrel with *La Chalotais*, and also because he had supplanted the minister Choiseul. Besides, he and Madame du Barry upheld each other, and, of course, some of the Duke's unpopularity fell on his followers. Those who took part in this quarrel, and even those who were mere spectators, brought eager passions into the conflict, therefore we must be very cautious when either side refers to Madame de Narbonne. Having made these remarks we will now return to our subject. During her long visits to the Court of France, Madame Infanta enjoyed returning to the life she had led as a young girl, and assumed her former place as though she had never left Versailles. She spent her evenings alternately with one or the other of her sisters. They drove out together to Choisy, Compiègne, Fontainebleau, and Dampierre; and, as Madame de Narbonne followed her mistress everywhere, Madame Adélaïde learnt to appreciate her. When, on the death of the Duchess of Parma, her lady-in-waiting lost her place, we can find no reason for Madame Adélaïde taking her into her household, unless we suppose that she had noticed her devotion, her amiability, and discretion, which, no doubt, the deceased princess had also praised.<sup>1</sup> When Madame de Narbonne entered the service of her new mistress, she brought with her, her two children, the eldest of whom was born at Parma, on the 28th December 1750. The younger son, Louis-Marie-Jacques-Amalric, was born on the 23rd August 1755, at Colorno, the summer residence of Madame Infanta.<sup>2</sup> Very little

<sup>1</sup> Madame de Donissan says positively in her *Souvenirs Inédits* that, on her deathbed the Duchess de Parma recommended Madame de Narbonne to her sister Adélaïde. (C. Stryienski, *Mesdames de France, filles de Louis XV.*, p. 255.)

<sup>2</sup> He was not born on the 24th as is generally stated. As, nowadays, an author is obliged to be precise, even in the smallest details, we will

is known about the elder son, who bore the title of Viscount.<sup>1</sup> But if it is true that manhood is portrayed in childhood, Louis de Narbonne, who was to be one of the most fascinating men of his age, must then have been a delightful and forward baby. Madame Adélaïde has been described as being "without sweetness or bounty, proud of her rank, relentless with regard to etiquette, full of prejudice, imperious and fidgetty." She had, however, one quality, or maybe weakness, that does not agree with her faults—she worshipped little children.<sup>2</sup> It was an occupation for this lonely, idle woman. These are the two reasons that brought Madame de Narbonne into close intimacy with Madame Adélaïde—her personal merit and the grace of her two children, especially Louis, who was always the favourite of the Princess.

We must here pause to reflect on a grave question.

In his *Souvenirs and Portraits*, Count Fédor Golovkine states with the utmost assurance that Louis de Narbonne was the son of Madame Adélaïde. "It is not exactly known," says he, "whether Louis XV. or the Dauphin

state that Count Louis de Narbonne was born on the 23rd August 1755; he was baptized privately on the 25th of the same month, and the christening was solemnly performed at Versailles on the 17th April 1762.

<sup>1</sup> In this branch of the de Narbonne family, the eldest son bore the hereditary title of Viscount. As for the younger sons, those for instance who took Holy Orders, when signing a document, they called themselves thus "Born of the Viscounts de Narbonne."

<sup>2</sup> When her brother the Dauphin died, followed fifteen months later by his wife, the Dauphine, Madame Adélaïde endeavoured to act as mother to the five orphan children, the eldest of which was not yet twelve years old. Later on, in spite of contrary influence, Louis XVI. always showed the deepest gratitude towards his aunt, and this is ample proof of the care with which she had surrounded the little family. This passion for young children never died away, for, twenty years later, we find the Princess doting on the daughter of another of her ladies—this young girl, Mademoiselle d'Osmond, who became Countess de Boigne, has related to us the days when she was the delight of the Court at Bellevue.

were guilty of this incest, but certainly it was either the father or the son."

Golovkine then tells us how an obliging mother was found for this embarrassing child. "As soon as the pregnancy of the mother was known, a certain Madame de Narbonne was called from Parma. This lady was very ambitious and was wasting her talent for intrigue in the boudoir of Madame Infanta. She was made lady-in-waiting to the Princess. She was said to be pregnant, and when the necessary time came, she was confined. As a reward, she was made Duchess; this title well suited her great name, but not the part she had consented to play. In spite of the favours bestowed on him, the Duke, who had higher feelings, withdrew from Court, and, when dying, did not hesitate to disinherit his supposed son."

It cannot be denied that certain appearances gave strength to the rumours which Golovkine has here reported; Count Louis bore a great resemblance to some of the Bourbons then alive; besides Madame Adélaïde overwhelmed him with favours. However, her tenderness may be easily explained by the fact that the Princess was devoted to children and was, moreover, the god-mother of Louis.

Count Golovkine belonged to a Slavonian family, and he judged with the passionate vehemence of his race; his evil tongue had brought him into such repute that he had been driven out from every employment, and, besides, he hated Napoleon and all those who served him. These facts explain his animosity towards Louis de Narbonne. But he knew nothing about his origin except by mere reports, current in the hostile society of which he was a member. We will not at present point out the erroneous dates and facts that occur in Golovkine's tale; we will simply call on the testimony of Madame de Boigne, who is above suspicion, and far



more reliable.<sup>1</sup> Madame de Boigne was the daughter of a lady-in-waiting to Madame Adélaïde, who did not like Madame de Narbonne, and of a man who, after having been friends with Count Louis, became estranged from him, as their opinions were very different, therefore Madame de Boigne was not inclined to be indulgent towards him. Her position made it easy for her to be much better informed than Golovkine; nevertheless, when referring to the rumours concerning the supposed maternity of the Princess, she declares that they are "false and absurd." As long as there are no better proofs than the appearances above mentioned, we shall do well to take Madame de Boigne's assertion as the true version of the story.

Madame de Narbonne entered the household of Madame Adélaïde in 1761, simply as a "lady in attendance." There were no less than twelve other ladies who were above her in rank. Nevertheless, in 1764, she was promoted to the title of "lady-to-attire," that is to say, she was in charge of the wardrobe of the King's eldest daughter. She was well-suited for the post, and her taste and ability were soon in renown both at Court and in town.<sup>2</sup> However, it was not merely by her clever

<sup>1</sup> As we have seen, Count Louis bore the name of Amalric. This uncommon name was frequently given in the Narbonne family; thus, we meet an Amalric in 1600. (*Archives of Lot-et-Garonne*, B. 31.) Without exaggerating the value of this remark, it seems unlikely—even if Golovkine's assertions be true—that the supposed mother would have had enough presence of mind to hunt up this name in her husband's parchments in order to bestow it on another person's son.

<sup>2</sup> *Correspondence du général-major de Martange*, published by Ch. Briard, p. 417. Municipal Archives of Versailles, civil condition (baptismal certificate of Louis de Narbonne). Count Fédor de Golovkine, *La Cour et le règne de Paul I. : portraits, souvenirs et anecdotes*, p. 312. *Memoirs of Madame de Boigne*, vol. i. p. 57. Édouard de Barthélémy, *Mesdames de France*. Marquis de Ségur, "Au Couchant de la Monarchie" appeared in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, 1st Feb. 1909, p. 606. Claude St André, *Madame du Barry*, p. 106. Through Madame de Narbonne's influence, Madame du Deffand was able to purchase for three



LOUIS XV, KING OF FRANCE

*From an engraving by J. Houbraken after J. G. Heilman*



management of the wardrobe that Madame de Narbonne won the confidence of her mistress ; she rendered services of a higher order. It must be remembered that during this period Madame Adélaïde lost successively her brother, her sister-in-law, and her mother. She saw Madame du Barry take the place of Madame de Pompadour. She assisted at the marriages of her three nephews, the new Dauphin, the Count de Provence, and the Count d'Artois. She witnessed the close of her father's reign, and the opening of that of Louis XVI. All these great public and private events concerned her very closely, and forced her to take many serious decisions. Madame de Narbonne was a wise and resolute woman ; she helped the Princess, and thus she acquired a firm and lasting empire over Madame Adélaïde. Without recalling all the affairs in which the name of Madame is associated with that of the Mistress of the Wardrobe, we will consider those that have some historical interest. Our readers will remember that in his correspondence, Mercy-Argenteau, ambassador to Maria Theresa, complains bitterly of their combined efforts to monopolise the young Archduchess, Marie Antoinette, on the day after her wedding. Six months later, he writes to the Empress that the new Dauphiness is very docile towards Madame Adélaïde, but that the latter is ruled by Madame de Narbonne, mistress of her wardrobe. Although he condescends to own that this lady has " fairly good qualities,"

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and a half louis, a doll which she intended to give to the niece of the Duchess de Choiseul, and for which the shopkeeper wanted no less than a hundred livres. " Her outfit is enormous ! I have put Madame de Narbonne at the head of the business. She has made all the purchases." (Madame du Deffand, *Letters to Walpole*, vol. i. p. 392, and *Recueil Sainte-Aulaire*, vol. i. p. 261.) Later on, during the American War of Independence, a milliner started a head-dress called " Les Insurgens," on which England was represented under the form of a snake. However, Madame Adélaïde's lady of the wardrobe decreed that this head-dress could not be worn as it would certainly bring on hysterics. (Bachaumont, vol. x. p. 325.)

he nevertheless considers her to be an intriguing woman, and fears that she may eventually govern the future Queen of France. A few weeks later he informs Maria Theresa that if the Dauphin fails to fulfil his conjugal duty, Madame de Narbonne is to be blamed for his coldness. He had promised to come to his wife's bedroom. Marie Antoinette hastened to confide this news to Madame Adélaïde and Madame de Narbonne, and soon the whole Court was informed. Moreover, Madame Adélaïde very foolishly undertook to exhort her nephew, whereupon the Dauphin took alarm and failed to keep his word. Marie Antoinette did not dare to complain of her aunt, so she threw all the blame upon Madame de Narbonne. Having noticed that the young Dauphiness was extremely weary of the great apartments in which she was either alone or with her unsociable husband, Madame de Narbonne got up some little parties to which the Dauphiness was enticed by her aunts. At this news the ambassador thought that the alliance between France and Austria was broken off. He hastened to Versailles and ventured to speak openly to Marie Antoinette. Then he poured out his bitter feelings to the Empress. On the 22nd June 1771, he wrote: "I am surprised and no less afflicted to see that the Dauphiness has taken such a fancy to Madame de Narbonne, who, although she has neither wit nor understanding, has managed to master Madame Adélaïde and makes her act most foolishly on all occasions." 17209.

Later on in July 1773, the imperial agent informs us that the Duke d'Aiguillon, minister of Louis XV., has made a regular bargain with Madame de Narbonne. He is to grant the mayoralty of Bordeaux to her son, and she herself is to have special advantages when the leases of the *fermes générales* are to be renewed. In return, Madame de Narbonne promises to obtain the goodwill of Madame Adélaïde for the Countess du

Barry, and thus ingratiate the favourite with Marie Antoinette! <sup>1</sup> Mercy-Argenteau never loses a chance of making Madame de Narbonne responsible for Madame Adélaïde's efforts to control Marie Antoinette, and the intrigues of the Aiguillon-Du Barry Cabal. <sup>2</sup>

It is well known that for many reasons, Mercy-Argenteau is a great authority amongst historians. His position was important and was enhanced by the fact that Maria Theresa and Marie Antoinette both honoured him with their confidence. His letters appear to be sincere, straightforward and conscientious; besides, they are full of precise and minute details that seem most convincing. However, even at the risk of upsetting an opinion that is generally admitted, I do not hesitate to say that the correspondence of this diplomatist does not always deserve credit, and that there are reasons to doubt his conscientiousness, his sincerity and even the reliability of his information. Thus, if we here refer simply to the reasons that concern our subject, and take the trouble of finding out whence Mercy took his information, we shall perhaps have a very strange surprise. "I have secured," says he, "three persons attached to the service of the Archduchess. One is a waiting-woman, the other two are valets; they give me an exact account of all that takes place within. I am daily informed of the conversation of the Archduchess with Abbé de Vermond, from whom she conceals nothing." Through the Marquise de Durfort, I hear the smallest remarks made at Mesdames' reception, and I have more people to inform me of what takes place at the King's when the Dauphiness is there."

<sup>1</sup> The rumour of this intrigue spread from Versailles to Paris. The gazetteers soon took it up, as we may see by the account in the *Observateur anglais*, vol. i. p. 48.

<sup>2</sup> *Correspondance secrète entre Marie Thérèse et le Comte de Mercy Argenteau*. Selections by Arneth-Geffroy, vol. i. pp. 56, 77, 173; vol. ii. p. 5; vol. iii. p. 19-21 and 65.

These then are the principal sources from which Mercy-Argenteau draws his information! Sometimes it is Abbé de Vermond,<sup>1</sup> sometimes it is a valet or a waiting-woman, that is to say, they are all paid spies!

What proof is there that Marie Antoinette, who had so much to keep from her mother, did not conceal anything from Abbé de Vermond, who was Mercy's spy and the spy of the Empress? Who can assure us that the valets gave an exact account of all that took place in the household? For a diplomatist, Mercy seems to have been strangely credulous. He is both inconsistent and credulous for, less than a month before, he sent to the Empress the following details concerning the morals of his informers. "The valets (those of Marie Antoinette) receive one hundred louis a month for the gaming-table of her Royal Highness, and whether she wins or whether she loses, nothing of the sum ever reappears—the waiting-women take whatever remains."

The Marquise de Durfort who keeps him informed is most to be distrusted.<sup>2</sup> She was a parvenu and as such

<sup>1</sup> In his valuable edition of the Letters of Mercy-Argenteau to Maria Theresa, Geffroy informs us that Abbé de Vermond, born in 1735, was of lowly extraction. He was acting as librarian of the Mazarin College, when Choiseul sent him to Vienna, in 1769, to attend to the education of Marie Antoinette, betrothed to the Dauphin. Maria Theresa felt unbounded confidence in him, and desired that he should remain attached to her daughter's service, in the quality of reader. A feeling of base jealousy excited Madame Campan against Abbé de Vermond and she accuses him of having had an evil influence over Marie Antoinette. Judging by the small success that attended the Abbé's mission, both at Versailles and in Vienna, we may conclude that his influence was not great.

<sup>2</sup> Madame de Durfort's life is a perfect romance. She was the daughter of a Bordeaux notary and married M. de Magnac, a country squire of the neighbourhood, who, although he was only a lifeguardsman, was a distant relation of the house of Durfort-Lorge. After having duly ascertained her husband's relationship to this distinguished family, she seized upon all his papers and started for the capital where, having obtained the necessary documents from a genealogist, she boldly intro-

hated Madame de Narbonne for her genuine nobility. Mistress of the Wardrobe and then lady-in-waiting to that most insignificant Princess, Madame Victoire, she was jealous of Madame de Narbonne who held the same position in the household of Madame Adélaïde who was first in age, rank and influence.<sup>1</sup> It is also very likely that Madame de Narbonne who, up to her death, as we shall see, was supremely indifferent to all but the service of her mistress, did very little to make herself agreeable. Maria Theresa had some consideration for Madame de Durfort because her husband had been sent to Vienna to fetch Marie Antoinette; this may have made the lady-in-waiting eager to serve Mercy-Argenteau, but

duced herself to Madame de Lorge whom she succeeded in captivating. It was not long before she assumed one of the titles belonging to the de Lorge family and had herself called Madame de Civrac. She was appointed to attend on Madame Victoire and eventually became lady-in-waiting to this princess. In the meantime, she had succeeded in finding a situation for her husband in the diplomatic corps. He had the honour of being sent to Vienna to ask for the hand of Marie Antoinette for the Dauphin, and it was he who conducted the Archduchess to France. His wife had given birth to three children; one son, who became Duke de Lorge and inherited the fortune of this branch of the Drufort family, and two daughters Madame de Donissan and Madame de Chastellux. Before her death, Madame de Durfort rose to the rank of a Duchess. She is supposed to have died of grief because her son failed to obtain the hand of the daughter of the Duchess de Polignac, then in the full blaze of her favour at Court. The origin and the history of Madame de Durfort were well known and afforded much amusement to the public. In a facetious and imaginary catalogue of books, published by Bachaumont under the title of *Library of the ladies of the Court, December, 1783, (Bibliothèque des dames de la cour)*, we may find the following work: *La bourgeoise de qualité, dédiée à Madame de Civrac* (The Noble Commoner). We may add that Madame de Narbonne fares no better in this catalogue, in which she figures as the author of *Traité sur l'ambition dédié à Madame Adélaïde*. (Treatise on Ambition, dedicated to Madame Adélaïde.)

<sup>1</sup> Madame de Donissan, daughter of the Duchess de Durfort, owns that her mother had "much ambition and of the grand style." She also says that Madame Victoire who was "accustomed to great subordination" was entirely ruled by her. (Souvenirs inédits) quoted by C. Strzyński in *Mémoires de France*, p. 255.



at the same time she had several private reasons for trying to injure her rival.<sup>1</sup>

The information which Mercy-Argenteau collected came from impure sources, and it is easy to understand that once in his hands, this information underwent various alterations. For centuries, the Court which he represented, had been the enemy of France. It was, therefore, his one object to strengthen the alliance that had just been made, and to protect it against the hostility with which it was still regarded in certain quarters. If we consider his correspondence we shall soon notice that the keynote to all his opinions and proceedings is to be found in the fact that he holds for true, good and praiseworthy anything in France that favours the interests of the Empire, whereas he condemns the contrary as false, bad and detestable. When writing to his sovereign, the Empress Maria Theresa, or to his hierarchical superior, the Chancellor Kaunitz, he reasons like a good diplomatist and faithful servant of the Habsburgs, but it would be foolish for us to suppose that he does so impartially, as a disinterested observer of men and things. Neither Madame Adélaïde nor Madame de Narbonne could be in odour of sanctity with him. He felt that the Princess was a stubborn champion of the old hostility towards the House of Austria. He

<sup>1</sup> Acting at the instigation of the Imperial ambassador, Madame de Durfort,—conscious or not of the part she was playing,—spied not only on Madame Adélaïde but also on the Dauphin. Referring to her, Mercy writes thus :—"The latter is very well informed of all that takes place in the Dauphin's surroundings and through her, I obtain details that I could not procure otherwise." However, her hatred of Madame de Narbonne was so intense that the ambassador could not fail to notice it. He goes on to say : "I have not the same faith in what the Marquise de Durfort reports concerning Mesdames ; nevertheless, it serves to put me on the track of many things."

<sup>2</sup> The habit of calling our political opponents fools and rogues, is far more ancient and widespread than we may at first suppose. Mercy-Argenteau and Kaunitz indulged freely in this proceeding.

disliked Madame de Narbonne because he thought she inspired her mistress, and also on account of her friendship for the Duke d'Aiguillon. She had known him for a long time, certainly since the early days of her marriage, for the Count de Narbonne and he were of the same generation. Both came from Gascony, and, very probably, they had played together in their childhood.<sup>1</sup> In 1754 they had met again in Italy, when d'Aiguillon went to Parma to bring back to France his unfortunate relation the Marquis de Crussol, who had gone mad. Since then, they had always remained closely connected. Mercy-Argenteau had good reason to fear d'Aiguillon, and in his correspondence he cannot say enough against him. The Duke had succeeded Choiseul as Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Mercy was well aware that he was secretly hostile to the Austrian policy of his predecessor, and still more so after the Partition of Poland, which the Cabinet of Vienna concealed so carefully from France, its ally. The Ambassador of Maria Theresa considered Madame de Narbonne to be an instrument which d'Aiguillon used against the daughter of his sovereign and consequently, against the Alliance. This explains the contempt and the insults he heaps on her. All has not been said when we show that the reports of Mercy-Argenteau concerning Madame Adélaïde and Madame de Narbonne, are far from trustworthy, and if we now turn from the diplomatic side of the question and consider that of the Princess and her Mistress of the Wardrobe, their conduct towards Marie Antoinette appears in a very different light. The daughter of Maria Theresa was barely fourteen and a half when she came to France. She had left a peaceful home for the most effervescent country in Europe. There were no intrigues at her mother's court, the one she came to was full of snares.

<sup>1</sup> Aiguillon is 120 kilometres from Aubiac, the patrimonial estate and cradle of the family.

Her numerous relations were all united and lived together after the patriarchal fashion. She now found herself in the midst of a family where death had claimed many victims, whilst the head of the house disgraced his age and rank by a life of debauchery. She was a foreigner and still spoke French very imperfectly; she had been brought up amongst other ways and customs, therefore she needed some one to guide and advise her. She could not depend on her husband, who was very little older than she, and whose nature was cold, awkward and shy. Is it then very astonishing that Madame Adélaïde should have sought to draw near to this child? The line of conduct chosen by the Princess was perfectly reasonable, and it was most natural that Marie Antoinette should submit to it. Madame Adélaïde sought to influence her new niece, because, as she was the nearest relation of the young couple, she thought it was her duty to take the place of a mother; moreover, as she was very devout, she was anxious to safeguard the virtue of her new niece. We must not forget that she was a French princess, and as such she did not want the Dauphiness to sacrifice her new country to the old. It would have been well if Marie Antoinette had turned a deaf ear to the insinuations of Mercy-Argenteau, and had not wearied so soon of her aunt's advice. No one can tell to what extent Madame de Narbonne helped to further the plans of Madame Adélaïde. Perhaps she inspired them; perhaps she merely helped to execute them. The Imperial ambassador wilfully misinterprets the part she played, and places her in the foreground. To respond to the confidence with which the princess honoured her, the Mistress of the Wardrobe did not think it sufficient to receive dressmakers and pay their bills. It is easy to understand that their combined efforts raised the ire of those who saw their base designs thus overthrown. But why should French historians



MARIE ANTOINETTE AS DAUPHINE.



lend a willing ear to their outcries and withdraw from the Princess and her attendant, the esteem which they seem to have so well deserved.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Recueil d'Arnoeth-Geffroy*, vol. i. pp. 69 and 97 ;—*Mémoires de Madame de Boigne*, vol. i. p. 66—*Bachaumont*, vol. xxv. p. 39, etc. I am well aware that Madame Adélaïde has been accused of having acted from no disinterested motives when she attempted to take possession of Marie Antoinette, on her arrival at Versailles. The young Princess was to deprive her of the first place which she had occupied at Court ever since the death of the Dauphiness Maria Josepha, and Madame Tante (Aunt) thought she would thus maintain her influence indirectly. I cannot vouch for the sanctity of Madame Adélaïde, consequently I will not deny that she was thinking of her own interests when she tried to monopolize the new Dauphiness. However, if we are to add this motive to the others, already mentioned, we must not attach too much importance to it, for Madame Adélaïde was too clever to forget that even if she succeeded in maintaining her position at Court, it would never be for long ; the Dauphin had two brothers and two sisters, and on his accession to the throne, the latter would take precedence of her. In the same way, when her nephews married, their wives would inflict on her the same humiliation. Under these circumstances, it was impossible for her to hope to establish a lasting authority over this little world, full of divergent interests.

## CHAPTER III

### MARIE ANTOINETTE AND MADAME DU BARRY

**I**F Madame de Narbonne suggested to the eldest daughter of Louis XV. this line of conduct towards the young Dauphiness, how are we to explain the accusation brought against her by Mercy-Argenteau, who declares that she made a regular bargain with the Duke d'Aiguillon in order to bring Madame du Barry into favour with Marie Antoinette? Is it possible that Madame Adélaïde would have debased herself by favouring such a disgraceful scheme? A great deal—perhaps too much—has been written about Madame du Barry; quite lately we have been favoured with an important biography which has been much praised by connoisseurs. However, I do not consider that this book or any other previous work on the same subject, gives a satisfactory and precise account of Marie Antoinette's attitude towards the favourite. It well deserved to be studied, for Marie Antoinette holds an important place in history, and we cannot be indifferent to her intercourse with Madame du Barry. It is extremely easy to elucidate the matter as we have the accounts of Mercy-Argenteau who, in this circumstance, was by turns, as in a play, spectator, actor and prompter. What was the attitude of the Dauphiness? What was that of Madame Adélaïde and Madame de Narbonne? And above all, what was that of this mentor who was so prompt to see the mote in his neighbour's eye? <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The situation being very much the same, we may make interesting comparisons between the conduct of the Dauphiness Marie Antoinette towards Madame du Barry, Mesdames, and Louis XV., and the attitude

When the liaison of Louis XV. with Madame du Barry first became known at Court, Mesdames, his daughters did not appear to be much concerned—they thought it was a passing fancy like many that had gone before. But they were “in despair”<sup>1</sup> when they discovered that they had to deal with a new favourite. In their distress, they urged their father to marry again, and even proposed an Archduchess. The King was at first surprised, and at last owned that he had thought of it himself and that perhaps he would come to such a decision. But that was simply a clever dodge by which he deluded them, and made them swallow the bitter pill of receiving his mistress. Henceforward, to profess hatred of Madame du Barry was a sure means of obtaining the favour of Mesdames. This became very evident, in the case of the Duke de Choiseul whom they had not received since the expulsion of the Jesuits. On the contrary, the smallest show of interest in the favourite, was sure to call forth their contempt. Thus, in spite of his devoutness, they were relentless towards the Duke de la Vauguyon. This then was the attitude of Mesdames towards the new mistress of the King, when the daughter of Maria Theresa appeared at Court. At the early date of the 9th July 1770, the Princess wrote to her mother: “The king treats me with the greatest kindness, and I love him most tenderly, but it is pitiful to see how weak he is with Madame du Barry, who is the most stupid and impertinent creature that can be imagined. She played with us every evening at Marly; twice she was seated next me, but she did not speak to me, and I purposely refrained from entering into conversation with her; nevertheless, when it was necessary, I spoke to her.”

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of the former Dauphiness Maria Josepha towards Madame de Pompadour, Mesdames and the King. For this study I will refer you to M. C. Stryienski's book: *La mère des trois derniers Bourbons*, pt. ii. ch. i.

<sup>1</sup> Mercy writing to Kauffitz, 29th December 1768.



If we reflect that these lines are signed by a child of fourteen and a half, a foreigner who had not yet spent two months in France, is it not evident that she is repeating a lesson? And who else but the daughters of Louis XV. would have dared to dictate these lines, that were so offensive to the King?<sup>1</sup> Not content with their own antagonism, they sought at once to make their new niece share in it. And they succeeded, far beyond their expectations, far beyond their hopes. Certainly, if we study the short history of what took place between Marie Antoinette and Madame du Barry, it is difficult to say what astonishes us most in her conduct. We can only wonder that she followed so easily the advice of her aunts and that she was so strong to resist all other efforts made to change her feelings.

"Nevertheless, when it was necessary, I spoke to her," she writes to her mother on the 9th July 1770. It is easy to enumerate the words spoken to the favourite by the Dauphiness. We have only to listen to Mercy-Argenteau, who has noted them down most carefully. On the first occasion, when he sought to bring about a conversation between the daughter of his sovereign and the mistress of Louis XV., Madame Adélaïde defeated him ignominiously. The favourite having at length grown weary of the contempt of the Dauphiness, had complained to the King and to the Duke d'Aiguillon. When this was known in Vienna, Maria Theresa and Kaunitz overwhelmed the Dauphiness with their remonstrances. Although he was

<sup>1</sup> On 2nd September 1771, Mercy writes to Maria Theresa that, following the invitation of the Duc d'Aiguillon, he had a private interview with Louis XV., on the 30th July, in the favourite's apartment at Compiègne. The King took him aside and requested him to act as his ambassador to the Dauphiness for she gave way to hatred and prejudices that she did not really entertain but which were "suggested to her by others," and affected to behave badly towards persons whom he admitted into his intimacy. The King repeated several times: "The Dauphiness is given bad advice; she must not follow it." Mercy considered that these words referred to Madame Adélaïde.

really vexed, Louis XV. did not dare to reprove the wife of his grandson, but he imposed the task on d'Aiguillon who passed it on to Mercy. The ambassador, being thus urged by the King and the Empress, begged the Dauphiness to be more gracious towards Madame du Barry, and, after hesitating and retreating many times, she at length consented.

"On the 10th August (1771)," writes Mercy to Maria Theresa, "I heard that Countess du Barry intended to go to the reception on the following day, and that she had invited Countess de Valentinois to accompany her. I informed H.R.H. the Dauphiness of this circumstance, as she had expressly wished that I should be on the lookout. She promised that she would say a few words to the favourite, but insisted on my being present. It was arranged that at the end of the game I was to draw near to the favourite, and enter into conversation with her. The Archduchess would then, as she went round the drawing-room, stop near me, and as though accidentally, say a few words to Countess du Barry. H.R.H. assured me that this arrangement was necessary on account of the fear with which she was overcome. I made her remark that she must be quite resolved to act in this way, otherwise it would appear as though I had sought to persuade her to speak to the favourite, and, if at the last moment Her Royal Highness showed an unconquerable reluctance to the step, I should make myself most ridiculous. The Archduchess was quite indignant that I should doubt her resolution; nevertheless I begged her not to inform her aunts of our little plan. She promised, but unfortunately the secret was not well kept. On the evening of the 11th, I went to the reception. The Countess was there with her companion. The Dauphiness called me, and said that although she felt very afraid, her resolve was still the same. After the game was over, Her Royal Highness

sent me towards the favourite with whom I began conversing. At this moment, all eyes were turned on me. The Dauphiness began talking to the ladies. She was drawing near and was only two steps from me, when Madame Adélaïde, who had not ceased watching her movements, raised her voice and said : " It is time to withdraw ! Let us go ! We will wait for the King in my sister's (Victoire) apartments."

At these words, the Dauphiness, who was about to repeat her part, fled behind the scenes, leaving the unfortunate Ambassador in the front of the stage to face the courtiers who had not failed to understand the situation. Needless to say that Mercy, who was very touchy, never forgave Madame Adélaïde.

It was customary on New Year's Day that the Court ladies should go and offer their good wishes to the royal family, and on the 31st December 1771, Mercy besought Marie Antoinette not to be hard on Madame du Barry. With some difficulty she was made to promise. On the following day, the favourite appeared, accompanied by the elder Madame d'Aiguillon, and Madame de Mirepoix. The Dauphiness first spoke to the Duchess d'Aiguillon, and then, as she passed in front of Madame du Barry, said to her ; " There is a large company to-day at Versailles." She then turned at once to Madame de Mirepoix. In the evening, however, she considered that she had done too much, and expressed her regret to Mercy, saying : " I have spoken once to her, and I have made up my mind that that woman shall never hear the sound of my voice again." This time, however, the Ambassador is obliged to own that Marie Antoinette had not had time to consult her aunts.

On the 14th August 1772, Mercy writes to the Empress that Madame du Barry, having informed him that she intended to pay her respects to the Dauphiness at Compiègne, on the Sunday, 26th July, he had begged the



MADAME DU BARRY

*From an engraving by J. Condé after a miniature by Cosway*



Princess to receive her graciously. "The favourite arrived with the Duchess d'Aiguillon after the King's Mass. The Dauphiness first spoke to Madame d'Aiguillon, and then turned towards the favourite as she made some remarks on the weather, and the hunting. Thus, although she did not speak directly to the Countess, the latter might think that the conversation was for her as much as for the Duchess d'Aiguillon."

On the 26th of the following October, Madame du Barry informs Mercy that she intends going to Fontainebleau on the following day to attend the reception given by the Dauphiness. He hastens to inform the latter, who appears "somewhat overcome." On the morning of the 27th, feeling anxious, he again applied to the Dauphiness as she came from Mass. "I have prayed well," said she, "I said 'Oh my God! If you will that I should speak, make me speak. I will act according to your Divine inspiration.'" Shortly before dinner the favourite arrived with the Duchess d'Aiguillon. "The Dauphiness spoke first to the latter; then she looked towards the favourite, and said: 'The weather is bad, it will be impossible to go out to-day.'" "This remark," says Mercy, "was not made directly to the person, and considering the tone and expression, the reception was not of the best."

Speaking about the New Year visits in 1773, the Ambassador relates that "Countess du Barry was received very badly by the Dauphiness who did not say a word to anyone, not even to the Duchess d'Aiguillon nor Madame de Mirepoix, who were with the favourite." Mercy's dismay was great; and in his indignation the Duke d'Aiguillon remarked that, "Her Royal Highness seemed to wish to mock the King by her manner towards those he cherished most."

At length, on the 1st August 1773, the Countess presented to Marie Antoinette, her niece who had been recently married. The Dauphiness did not open her lips.

The two ladies met with the same reception when they attended the drawing-room in the evening. On the morning of the 2nd, according to the custom, they both returned to pay their respects to the Dauphiness, who again refused to speak to either of them. Thus we see that Marie Antoinette never wavered in her conduct towards Madame du Barry. No doubt, she was encouraged by Mesdames, but at the same time she was following her own instinct and feelings.

Is it necessary to remind the reader how her conduct incensed Maria Theresa, Kaunitz and Mercy? It is easy to understand the ire of the Chancellor and the Ambassador. As statesmen, they considered Marie Antoinette and Madame du Barry as mere pawns on the political chess-board. But the anger of the Empress is less comprehensible. It has been said that it is very curious to study her as a sovereign, a mother and a Christian. It is indeed curious—more so than one might at first believe. Strictly speaking, we can understand that she forgot her duty as a Christian and a mother, when, acting as a sovereign, she advised and reproved her daughter concerning Madame du Barry at the time of the Partition of Poland. This transaction might well have incensed Louis XV. It is well known that it was a question of traditional policy with the King of France to defend this unfortunate country, nevertheless, in spite of the Franco-Austrian Alliance, the Partition was concealed from him until it was accomplished. It is evident that at this moment above all, it was necessary to show some regard towards the King's mistress. But if we consider the dates of the letters, we shall see that the Empress did not wait for this occasion to scold Marie Antoinette about Madame du Barry. It was on the 17th February 1772, that Russia and Prussia signed their agreement, and it was not until the next April that Austria joined their alliance. Nevertheless, on the

30th September 1771, at a time when she had no suspicion of the plans of Frederick and Catherine, Marie Theresa thus writes to her daughter :—

“ Confess that you are embarrassed, and that you are afraid, even to say good-day ! You make such a fuss about a remark on a dress, or any other trifle ! . . . All that you have to know about Barry is that she is admitted to the Court and to the King’s society. You are his first subject ; you owe him obedience and submission. You must be an example to the Court and the Courtiers. Obey the wishes of your master.” A few months later, during the Polish crisis, an important political reason might justify these lines in which, indeed, we find the sovereign, but very little of the mother or the Christian.

Nevertheless, in spite of adverse winds and waves, the Dauphiness and her aunts, persisted in keeping Madame du Barry at a distance. Not only had Madame Adélaïde given up all hope of drawing her father from this disgraceful bondage, but it seemed that her very efforts had strengthened his passion.

On the 19th December 1771, Mercy writes to Marie Theresa : “ The influence which Madame du Barry has over the King, is boundless, and her action is felt in all that concerns the Royal family. The more she is mortified by their bad treatment, the more she exerts her power to show her resentment. Thus, all the favours which Mesdames demand, are denied them, and they are subjected to continual annoyances of every kind. The King’s attitude towards his children is the source of a most disastrous scandal.” If this was the situation in 1771, how much greater must have been the breach between the King and his children, two years later, in 1773. Since it was impossible to dethrone the favourite, was it clever to carry on a useless and disastrous warfare. Would it not have been wiser to treat with her, and settle on a *modus vivendi* ? This had long been the



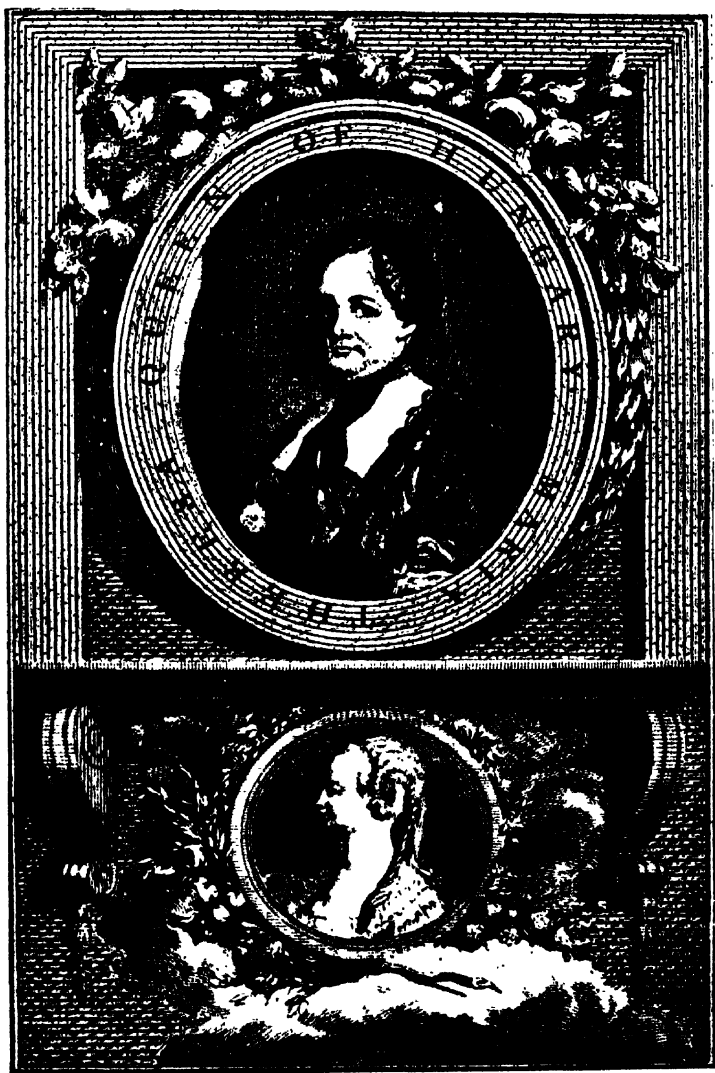
dearest wish of the King, the Empress, of Kaunitz, d'Aiguillon and Mercy. From different motives they all fervently wished for this arrangement. This will explain the effort made by Madame de Narbonne to bring about a reconciliation. Evidently, if she consented to mix herself up in this affair, it must have been because the belligerents felt they were at a crisis; for, although she was an old acquaintance of the Duke d'Aiguillon, she had no intercourse with Madame du Barry. The biographers of the favourite mention several noble ladies who sooner or later condescended to pay their court to her; but they never mention the name of Madame de Narbonne. Her dislike was so well-known,<sup>1</sup> that she had angered d'Aiguillon, and he had endeavoured to make her lose her place, for he considered her as an obstacle to the realisation of his plans concerning Madame Adélaïde. Mercy-Argenteau gives us these details concerning the feelings of the Countess towards Madame du Barry and her quarrel with d'Aiguillon. It is, therefore, difficult to believe him when he tries to persuade us that the lady-in-waiting sold herself to this minister, and endeavoured to bring about an arrangement between the favourite and the royal family. It is quite possible, and even probable, that in his difficulty, the Duke d'Aiguillon may have sought a reconciliation with his former friend.

"As a proof of his baseness," writes Mercy, "Madame Adélaïde said to the Dauphiness that the Duke d'Aiguillon now became assiduous towards Madame de Narbonne whom he had grievously offended."<sup>2</sup>

Although there is no actual proof of the facts, I will not deny that he may have offered her the mayoralty

<sup>1</sup> "She became quite inflamed when speaking against the 'royal favourite,'" says Mercy, referring to receptions held at the New Year (1772).

<sup>2</sup> Mercy writing to Maria Theresa, 16th June 1773.



MARIA THERESA



of Bordeaux for her son and some financial advantage. But Madame Adélaïde's conversation with the Dauphiness is sufficient proof that Madame de Narbonne rejected his proposals. If she had listened to him, the daughter of Louis XV. would not have hesitated to brand her as "base," as well as d'Aiguillon.

Mercy owns that he had repeatedly endeavoured to make the Dauphiness more gracious to the favourite. But what made him angry, and what brought him at length to desist, was the fact that Madame Adélaïde was now making the same efforts, and that, in case of success, she would take all the merit on herself. This thought was unbearable to him, so he and his auxiliaries worked cleverly to alarm the royal family. There were protestations on all sides. Madame Adélaïde was frightened and beat a hasty retreat. Thus no more negotiations were attempted.

## CHAPTER IV

### MADAME ADÉLAÏDE'S GENEROSITY

**W**E might investigate other intrigues which contemporaries and, later on, historians attribute to Madame de Narbonne's influence. Thus, when Louis XVI. ascended the throne and sought for an experienced counsellor, Madame Adélaïde is supposed to have recommended the old Count de Maurepas, but many are of the opinion that this choice was made indirectly through the influence which the lady-in-waiting exercised over the Princess.<sup>1</sup> But no doubt, we have said enough on the subject to answer the aim we had of proving that when Madame de Narbonne gave advice, she was, at least, inspired by the most honourable and often, by the most delicate feelings. To accomplish what she considered her duty towards her mistress, she did not hesitate to break with friends that were dear to her, and to stir up against herself the most terrible ill-will. But she was not devoting herself to an ungrateful heart. Madame Adélaïde felt that she was being served with a devotion seldom met with, above all at Court, and she rewarded her as became the daughter of a king. It is now high time for us to show how she paid this debt of gratitude. Through the marriage settlement of Monsieur and Madame de Narbonne, we were able to ascertain that they possessed more documents than money. Their stay at the

<sup>1</sup> I have discussed this matter so fully elsewhere that I cannot refer to it again here. To readers, who may be interested in the question I will mention the review, *Les Feuilles d'histoire*, vol. ii. p. 12 (1st July 1909).

Court of Parma had not enriched them, for, as we have seen, there was not much to be reaped there.

On his return to France, the Count de Narbonne seems to have had but one desire, that of retrieving his losses by retiring to his estates in Gascony. If we may judge by the few letters that we have from him—letters written in a loose, rough style—he was certainly not a courtier.<sup>1</sup> He loved his native land above everything else, and up to his death he scarcely ever left it, even during the Revolution. As for the Countess, although she was a native of Auvergne, she had been taken to Versailles at such an early age that the Royal Palace was her only landmark. Moreover, she had two children to bring up and settle in life. How would they have been able to manage with the slight means that were at their disposal, in such a god-forsaken hole as Aubiac, which she did not even care for in the least, and where she would have died of ennui? Moreover, her occupation had given her the habit of directing herself and commanding others, so she had taken authoritative ways that could not well brook the yoke of a husband, especially one that was surly and crabbed as hers seems to have been. Whether for these reasons or for others, to us unknown, the Count and Countess soon separated. We may, however, be sure that it was not for the cause mentioned by Golvokine. Their separation took place without scandal or éclat of any kind and they kept up a regular correspondence. Although their letters do not betray any warm tenderness, at the same time, they do not betray any serious disagreement. Both writers show the same keen solicitude about their children, and especially about the very one who is supposed not to have belonged to them.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Those about Mme. de Durfort considered Mme. de Narbonne's husband, "a fool and of moderate rank" (*Souvenirs de Mme. de Donissan*), (quoted by C. Stryenski, *ibid.*, p. 255).

<sup>2</sup> Half a dozen of these letters, dating from the end of 1779, are in the *Arch. Nat.*, T. 1496. We will refer to them again.

The Count took his flight towards his beloved Gascony, leaving his wife and children to manage for themselves in Madame Adélaïde's household. As we have already seen, the Princess promptly took an interest in her new lady-in-waiting and her little family. It seems likely that the first favour which she won for her was a pension drawn on the revenue of the Duchy of Parma, and which was granted in consideration of the services she had rendered to the Infanta. This pension amounted to 4513 livres after the usual dues had been withdrawn. As the greater portion of the revenue of Parma was supplied to the Duke by Louis XV. and Maria Theresa, we may conclude that France also paid this debt of the Royal Princess.

Although Madame de Narbonne was on bad terms with her husband, we must do her justice in saying that she was always willing to help her sisters and brothers-in-law, and to let them share in the credit she enjoyed. The Count had three sisters, the eldest became a nun,—another married in her own province the Marquis de Montesquiou-Fezensac, and the third became the wife of M. de Montlezun, governor of the citadel of Marseilles. We know little more than the name of Madame de Montlezun, but we hear that Madame de Montesquiou had several children who were about the same age as those of her sister-in-law. The Countess de Narbonne brought up her nephews with her own children. The elder one, who entered the army, was always on good terms with his cousin, Count Louis; the younger brother took Holy Orders and, under the name of Abbé de Montesquiou, was well known for his political adventures.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Mémoires du Comte de Rambuteau*, pp. 201-203. Abbé de Montesquiou had been brought up with the Mme. de Narbonne's sons, and he retained the stamp of this education, that is to say, he was most amiable, his manners were graceful and his conversation full of charm. "He is of the same style as M. de Narbonne and M. de Talleyrand—the model of a courtier," said Mme. de Géraudo, who certainly never suspected whence came this so-called "de Narbonne style."

Very probably, Madame de Narbonne was a long time without seeing her sister-in-law, who was a nun. She was three or four years older than her brother, and it seems likely that Jeanne-Marie de Narbonne made her vows at an early age in the Dominican Convent of Prouilhan, in the diocese of Condom. She had never left her cloister since her profession when, in 1779, her sister-in-law, who had taken possession of her castle in Vermandois, obtained for her, no doubt through Madame Adélaïde, the direction of the Royal Abbey of Origny-Sainte Benoîte, near St. Quentin (Aisne). As she was a holy and sensible woman, we may gladly suppose that Madame de Narbonne often visited her when staying at her castle.<sup>1</sup> According to the written law as it was understood in the jurisdiction of the Parliament of Toulouse, the two young abbés de Narbonne were at the mercy of their elder brother's generosity. To make their way in the world, they had no other means, but their wish to succeed, their good looks and merry wit—qualities which rarely failed amongst the juniors of Gascony. The smallness of his own means naturally curtailed their brother's generosity,<sup>2</sup> and consequently, as soon as their sister-in-law had gained a certain footing at Court, they both came and placed themselves beneath her protection. Without making them responsible for her grievances

<sup>1</sup> Although she was very aged and her legs paralysed, the Abbess of Origny was thrown into the dungeons of St Quentin with one of her nuns who had refused to forsake her (1793). She died there on Saturday, March 8th, 1794, at the age of seventy-eight. (Town-hall of St Quentin. Etat civil) cf. J. Poissonnier, *L'histoire de l'Abbaye royale d'Origny—Ste Benoîte*, p. 150.

<sup>2</sup> On the 7th January 1758, the Count granted a life-annuity of 100 livres to his youngest brother, a tonsured clerk of the diocese of Condom, and living at the time in Paris, at the Seminary of St Magloire—The gift was granted in order "to help him to realise his wish to obtain Holy Orders and to enable him to live suitably in the ecclesiastical state." This is the only trace that is to be found of the Count de Narbonne's munificence.



against her husband, she willingly exerted herself to bring them into favour with her mistress. Indeed, Abbé de Vermond, who was less fortunate with Marie Antoinette, notes somewhat bitterly how easy Madame Adélaïde made their career.<sup>1</sup> On the 30th October 1762, the elder of the two abbés, who was then Grand Vicar in the diocese of Agen, was consecrated Bishop of Gap, and almost at the same time he was appointed chaplain to Mesdames Victoire and Sophie of France. In 1773, he received the bishopric of Evreux with an income of 30,000 livres, and five years later he was made Abbot of the Abbey of La Lyre, the revenues of which amounted to 17,000 livres.<sup>2</sup>

As for the younger of the three brothers, as soon as he left the Seminary, the Bishop of Meaux, first chaplain to Madame Adélaïde chose him as one of his grand-vicars. In the same year 1761, the Abbé de Narbonne had been appointed chaplain in the Royal Chapel and became holder of the benefices of the Abbey of St. Michel-sur-Tonnerre (diocese of Langres) which he exchanged, in 1772, for that of St. Michel-en-Thiérache (diocese of Laon), the revenues of which amounted to 9500 livres. And finally, in 1777, we find him at the head of the Abbey of St. Sernin of Toulouse the richest and most envied monastic fief. In 1777, reduction being made of the dues which were certainly rather heavy, St. Sernin was worth 64,600 livres and in 1787, 78,510 livres. Finally, in 1782, the Abbé de Narbonne added to the profits of this magnificent prebend, those of the Priory of Notre-Dame d'Asnières and Baillon, in the diocese of Beauvais—Are we to suppose that the two Abbés were endowed with talents that justified such rapid and brilliant careers

<sup>1</sup> Note written by the Abbé and enclosed in a letter of Mercy-Argenteau to Maria Theresa, 7th June 1774.

<sup>2</sup> *Inventaire des Archives des Hautes Alpes*, series G. t. iii. Introduction, p. xxiv. (contains a few errors in the details).

in the Church? Possibly it was so—Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that their sister-in-law's influence with Madame Adélaïde greatly helped them over more than one stage.<sup>1</sup>

However numerous the favours bestowed on them, they are nothing in comparison with those showered on the Mistress of the Wardrobe by the Princess. The interests of Madame de Narbonne are so closely connected with those of her mistress that it is not always easy to distinguish them. Here again, facts destroy the legend set on foot by the Choiseul clan. The Princess, whom they depict to us as proud, heartless and unfeeling, appears to us as a weak and obliging woman who felt so happy to have found a prop in the strong and enlightened friendship of Madame de Narbonne and to share in her children the joys of motherhood, that she seems not to know how to express her gratitude. She longed to raise the Mistress of the Wardrobe to the supreme rank of Lady-in-waiting. Since 1751, the post had been occupied by the Duchess of Beauvilliers, but we may conclude that she was in no hurry to quit her position for it was only many years later that it became vacant by her death. By way of compensation, the Princess heaped on her friend every possible favour. On the 19th December 1767, she obtains for her an annuity of 4800 livres drawn on the States of Languedoc, and on the 1st August 1770, another pension of 1500 livres supplied by the Clergy of France. Ten days later, she obtained for her the honours of the *grandes entrées* at Court.<sup>2</sup> When her eldest son, the Viscount de Narbonne married Mlle, de la Roche Aymon,<sup>3</sup> the King

<sup>1</sup> *Arch. Nat.*, T. 567.

<sup>2</sup> Letter of the Duke of Villequier, first gentleman of the Chamber to Mme. de Narbonne. Compiègne, 10th August 1770.

<sup>3</sup> Daughter of Antoine-Louis François, Major-General Count de La Roche Aymon, and the late Françoise-Charlotte de Bidal d'Asfeld.

granted in February 1771, to the young bride a post in the household of his eldest daughter and a pension of 6000 livres, free of all dues.<sup>1</sup> In the month of November of the same year, Madame Adélaïde tried insidiously to persuade Baron de Montmorency, her equerry, that the government of Aunis, to which he had just been appointed, required his presence on the spot and that he had therefore better send in his resignation. But the Baron, who was upheld by Madame du Barry, turned a deaf ear on her suggestion, so that young Louis de Narbonne, for whom the Princess was working, was obliged to content himself with the survivorship of the position. On the 10th June 1772, the daughter of Louis XV. provided the necessary funds, *i.e.* 160,000 livres to secure for Madame de Narbonne a life-annuity of 11,000 livres which on her death was to go to her son Louis. Four years later, the Mistress of the Wardrobe acquired the castle and estate of La Bove. It is well to consider every detail of this purchase as it plays an important part in the history of the Countess de Narbonne and her position, with regard to her mistress.

On the 26th August 1776, François de Narbonne, Bishop of Evreux made over to his sister-in-law, a sum of 502,400 livres to enable her to purchase with all the goods and furniture contained in the two castles, the estate and barony of La Bove as also the estate and manor of Juvincourt, both of which were situated close together, in Vermandois.<sup>2</sup> The total price of these two estates amounted to 802,400 livres including 2400 livres for goodwill. It was settled that 102,400 livres should be paid

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The Archbishop of Rheims, Grand Almoner of France was her grand-uncle. As in the case of the Narbonne family the La Roche Aymon were of Gascon origin.

<sup>1</sup> Letter of the Duke de Choiseul to the Countess de Narbonne—13th November 1770.

<sup>2</sup> Aune, district of Laon, canton of Craonne.

at once when the deed of sale was drawn up and 200,000 on the first day of the following January, 200,000 on the 1st of July, besides a perpetual annuity of 15,000 livres to sink the remaining 300,000 livres due on the sale price. This gift was to be considered paraphernal, that is to say, it was to belong personally to the receiver and not to come under the control of the husband from whom, as we know, the Countess was separated. On the same day, the donor declared that this sum of 502,400 livres was due to the liberality of a third person who did not wish to be mentioned for the present, and that he intended to publish the name of the giver later on, when the said person would consider it suitable to make known "her bounty towards the said lady, Countess de Narbonne." Finally, on the 12th February 1778, the Bishop of Evreux "acting according to the good pleasure of Madame Adélaïde of France and in consequence of her formal consent" declared that the 502,400 livres which he had handed over to his sister-in-law came from the liberality of "Madame Adélaïde of France who, when the contract was drawn up, had bestowed the said sum of 502,400 livres on the said Lord, Bishop of Evreux with the express condition imposed by Madame Adélaïde that her name should not be mentioned . . . as she had not considered the moment favourable for making herself known as the author of this bounty and intending to do so later on, when she would think it well."

The estate of La Bove belonged to Gaspard-Louis de Caze, governor of the generalship of Brittany; he had received it from his father who had been himself governor of Champagne. As farmers-general, the Cazes had amassed great wealth, and their castle was mentioned among the most luxurious dwellings of famous financiers, which were then to be seen in a range of thirty leagues outside Paris. However, as is often the case when a fortune is too rapidly acquired, this

great wealth soon melted away in the hands of prodigal sons and La Bove had to be sold. This castle was built in the "modern style" and stood on the side of a hill, commanding an extensive view. There were three grand suites of rooms for the masters of the mansion and fifteen smaller ones, no less magnificently furnished, to receive their guests. Like most financiers of their time, the Cazes were most hospitable people and had given great entertainments at La Bove, especially theatrical representations, for which purpose, a hall had been specially designed. There was also a chapel provided with four beautiful vestments and all that was necessary for Divine Service. Finally, as they prided themselves on being lettered, they had gathered together a beautiful library, full of books and manuscripts; however, malignant tongues declared that they did not understand a word of them. Two courtyards, separated by an iron gate, lay in front of the building behind which was a flower garden and a large terrace. A great park of over one hundred acres stretched out towards the south. It was surrounded by high walls and paths had been carefully laid out, leading down to a great sheet of water. The cellars were vast and well-kept, the stables could lodge fifty to sixty horses, there were five coach-houses, a wine press and several farms in the neighbourhood—besides windmills and watermills. Seven hundred and fifty acres of copsewood stretched over three different parishes and there were six acres of vineyards. All these appurtenances, including seignorial rights over six parishes, went far to make the estate most valuable. As for the castle of Juvincourt, it was less important but strongly built after the ancient mode, and surrounded by moats that were supplied with water from a rushing stream. The entrance to the inner court, which was planted with trees, was guarded by a great arched doorway above which rose a square pavilion, flanked by two small round

towers. On the right and the left of the entrance was a whole suite of buildings—stables coach-houses and a dovecot—to the right lay seven acres of meadows and orchards. The advantages of Juvincourt were as follows : three farms, a water-mill, 95 acres of meadows let out to the peasants, 77 acres of copsewood and seigniorial rights over two parishes. Madame de Narbonne made long and frequent stays at La Bove. She often entertained Mesdames of France, especially in the autumn during the vintage season, and as Mesdames always travelled with a certain amount of pomp, bringing with them a numerous company—actors, musicians and many attendants—it was no small matter to receive their visit. The roads leading to La Bove were bad—Madame de Narbonne obtained from the Governor of Soissons the necessary repairs and finally a carriage road connecting the castle with the high road to Laon.<sup>1</sup> Here and there Madame de Narbonne placed some new landmarks fixing the boundary of the estate and beneath these, in our own days have been found counters bearing her arms and those of her husband. She fully understood the duties that became her as lady of the castle. She held the village children on the baptismal fonts—On the 1st of September 1786, she signed an engagement before a notary, promising

<sup>1</sup> In the archives of the department of Aisne there are seven letters of the governor of Soissons concerning the repairs of the road leading to La Bove. In the town-library of Laon, there is one letter written on the same subject by Mme. de Narbonne to the Governor—The road is still called the Ladies' Way (*Route des Dames*), in memory of the Mesdames of France. It begins at the National Road from Paris to Soissons and Laon and ends at Craonne. The famous battle of Craonne was fought on this road, and in the vicinity, on the 7th March 1814—however, it does not lead directly to La Bove. In order to reach the castle, Mesdames were obliged to leave it near the Farm of Hurtebise, to go down into the Forest of Vauclerc passing in front of the Cistercian Monastery of the same name (of which there still remain some fine portions) and there ascend the tableland at the end of which rose the castle of La Bove. (This information I owe to the courtesy of M. Broche, keeper of the archives of Aisne.)

to keep at her own expense in the village of Bonconville (to which La Bove belonged) for the relief and service of the sick poor, three Sisters of Charity "and even a greater number if necessary," to lodge them suitably and to pay each one a salary of 300 livres. One of the Sisters was to teach the little girls.<sup>1</sup> At the same time she interested herself in the creation of a chair for the study of obstetrics, and in choosing the professor and those who wished to study and become midwives. If we consider the benefits which Madame de Narbonne showered on the country and the improvement she made at La Bove, it is easy to see that she meant to make a permanent abode of the estate. She was reckoning without the Revolution.<sup>2</sup> Besides this important gift, the Countess received simultaneously two other favours of another kind. The aged Duchess de Beauvilliers having at length made up her mind to die, the Princess hastened to beg the King to promote her Mistress of the Wardrobe to the rank of Lady-in-waiting, the duties of which she had long performed, without enjoying its prerogatives, and to confer on her the title of Duchess. Her promotion and the letters-patent bestowing on her the ducal title are both dated from the same day—the 30th December 1780. Madame Adélaïde's Lady-in-waiting had the management of her whole household. She signed for the payment of all expenditure and the entire staff of servants and attendants depended on her. This eminent position was remunerated by various salaries drawn from different coffers for some reason which we cannot well explain

<sup>1</sup> This foundation is supposed to have been established in the actual town-hall of Bonconville.

<sup>2</sup> *Arch. Nat.*, T. 568. *Archives of Aisne*, 425 and 516; E. 96-103. *Archives of the borough of Bonconville*, G.G. 3:—Town library of Laon—Collection of autographs. Portfolio 12, No. 97—*Selections of Arneth-Geffroy*, t. i. p. 241. Thirion, *Vie privée des financiers au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, pp. 191-198. Th. Courtaux, *Notice historique sur la baronnie de la Bove et sur le Château de ce nom*, p. 66-67.

to-day. The Civil List contributed 9358 livres; the King's Household 7200 livres—and the Royal Treasury 4500 livres—by way of *gages du conseil*, which made a total of 21,058 livres. The parchments which endowed Madame de Narbonne with the ducal title conferred the same on her husband. It could not be otherwise. The King declared himself to be well satisfied with the services of Jean-François, Count de Narbonne-Lara Marshal in the Royal Army and Commander of the City of Castres and other places, nevertheless, his satisfaction cannot have been so great as to justify his raising him to the highest rank in the peerage of the kingdom. This incredible favour was bestowed on him simply because of the friendship with which the two daughters of Louis XV. had honoured his wife—the wife he had abandoned. It is a pity that history does not relate in what spirit he received the news of his promotion. The title was merely honorary—a “*duchy à brevet*”—not to be transmitted to their children.<sup>1</sup>

As we consider Madame de Narbonne overwhelmed with funds, pensions, estates, posts, titles and honours, we may think that Madame Adélaïde had done every possible thing to prove her gratitude to her friend. And yet she was destined to make other sacrifices, not for her attendant, but for a person that was equally dear to them both—for the spendthrift Louis de Narbonne—who was the pride and despair no less of his real parent than of his adopted mother.

<sup>1</sup> *Arch. Nat.*, V. 568 and 013765.



## CHAPTER V

### LOUIS DE NARBONNE'S YOUTH

**L**OUIS DE NARBONNE was five or six years of age when his mother first entered the service of Madame. He was a bright child with lively eyes and smiling lips, and his mind was as alert as his body was active. His brother who was five years older, was sent to school at an early age, and it may be for this reason or because he was less gifted and already afflicted with the deafness of which he complains later on,<sup>1</sup> that young Louis enjoyed if not all, at least the greater portion of the affection of the royal family. The four last ladies of France, in particular, showered upon him the barren and unemployed treasures of the mother's heart that every woman bears within her. After his birth at Parma, Louis de Narbonne had been baptized privately only, and he was seven years of age when, on 17th April 1762, he received the sacrament with all the usual solemn pomp. As in the case of the royal children of France, the ceremony was performed by the highest ecclesiastical dignitary of the Court, the Grand Almoner of France in the very chapel of Versailles.<sup>2</sup> As though he had been of royal birth, his

<sup>1</sup> "I am so deaf that I can scarcely hear God's thunder," says he in one of his letters.

<sup>2</sup> In the same way, on the last journey of Madame Infanta to France, the eldest son of Madame de Narbonne, who had also been simply anointed after his birth, received the sacrament with all the usual ceremonies in the King's Chapel, at Versailles, on the 28th October 1758. The Dauphin stood proxy for the Infanta, Duke of Parma, and the godmother was the Infanta, Duchess of Parma.

godfather was the heir to the throne, Louis Auguste, Duke de Berry, eldest son of the Dauphin, and his godmother, Madame Marie Adélaïde de France, eldest daughter of the King.<sup>1</sup> When he was of age to be put into the hands of men, his mother sent him to the Oratorian College at Juilly, where, with the greatest facility, he went through a course of deep and brilliant studies. During the holidays, the Dauphin who was as much fascinated as his sisters, would amuse himself by reading with him some chapter of Xenophon. After having completed his education by the study of mixed mathematics as applied to the art of war, he was admitted to attend the school of artillery at Strasburg and eventually became Captain of Dragoons and cornet in the gendarmerie. At the age of twenty-three, he was second

<sup>1</sup> I owe the following transcription of the Baptismal certificate to the courtesy of M. Couard, archivist.

" In the year 1762, on the 17th April, Louis-Marie-Jacques-Almaric, son of the most high and mighty lord, Jean-François, Count de Narbonne, Colonel of the Infantry regiment of Soissonnais, Commanding for the King in the dioceses of Castres, Albi and Lavaur, first groom of the stole to H.R.H. the Infante Duke of Parma, ex-corporal of the King's armies, and of high and mighty dame, Françoise de Chalus, his spouse, lady-in-waiting to Madame, born at Parma on the 23rd August 1755, anointed or baptized on the 25th, of the same month and the same year, has received baptism in the King's Chapel, from the hands of high and mighty lord, Charles-Antoine de la Roche-Aymon, Archbishop Primate of Narbonne, president of the States General of the province of Languedoc, Grand Almoner of France, Commander of the Order of the Holy Ghost, etc. in the presence of undersigned curate. The godfather was high and mighty Prince Louis-Auguste of France, Duke of Berry, and the godmother High and Mighty Princess Madame Marie Adélaïde of France who have signed :—

" LOUIS-AUGUSTE

" MARIE ADÉLAÏDE

" LOUIS-MARIE-JACQUES-ALMARIC

" FRANÇOISE CHALUS NARBONNE

" CH.—A. *Archbishop of Narbonne, Grand Almoner of France*

" ALLARD, *Parish Priest.*"

To be noticed: the signature of the newly baptized one, and the absence of the father's.

Colonel of the regiment of Angoumois and on the 29th October 1786, he was named Colonel (of the staff) of the Piedmontese infantry. Having thus served under the three arms, he was fit to occupy the highest military posts. In the various garrisons in which he had been stationed, and more particularly at Strasburg, which was a centre of intense thought, he had not only taken interest in things connected with his own calling, but had employed a great part of his leisure hours in studying history, common law, the German language, and above all state-craft, which fascinated him to such an extent that, when at Versailles he prevailed upon Monsieur de Vergennes to allow him to spend hours at the Foreign Office, conversing with the clerks and perusing the correspondence of our agents abroad. Many years after, Napoleon was heard to say:—"Narbonne knows by heart the negotiations of ancient Europe as well as Bassano remembers the debates of the Constitutional Assembly." And Marshal de Castellane, who had been his aide-de-camp says "Count Louis de Narbonne owes the greater part of his knowledge to the lifelong habit of reading when travelling in a carriage. . . . He was constantly on the road between Paris and Versailles, trying to conciliate the duties of his post and his passion for pleasure. He has told me that the amount of matter which he has read in this way is something stupendous."<sup>1</sup>

Eager to know all, clever and witty, with aptitudes that qualified him in every way, Louis de Narbonne was well known in those circles where philosophy, politics and literature were the chief topics. It would have been well if he had not resorted to another very different society.

But although he frequented the *salons* of the intellectual,

<sup>1</sup> Administrative archives of the War Office (Notes on the Viscount and Count de Narbonne. Villemain: *Souvenirs Contemporains*, v. i. p. 11; *Journal du Maréchal de Castellane*, vol. i. p. 32.

he was far more assiduous in the company of spendthrifts. In witty and learned circles everyone wanted to have him, but there was a perfect craze for him in pleasure-loving sets. With the same unconcern as his companions, he scattered his money to the winds, but, whereas his friends were mostly the sons, grandsons or sons-in-law of wealthy financiers, he could only draw on his mother's credit, and she herself depended entirely on the favour of Madame Adélaïde. However, this may be, Louis de Narbonne the handsome, witty spendthrift cavalier, the accomplished type of French gallantry, appeared in the very foremost rank of the brilliant worldlings whose feats filled the Chronicles of the last years of the Old Régime. Who will ever recount the youthful adventures and the lucky chances of this great seducer? The anecdote which one of his sons-in-law<sup>1</sup> relates, will perhaps give us some idea of his daring. "At the time he was very much in love with the Marquise de Coigny<sup>2</sup> and had, in the person of Monsieur d'Houdetot, an unfortunate rival. One evening, as he was leaving the lady and still held in his hand a rose, which she had given him, Monsieur d'Houdetot fell on him and obliged him, without further preliminary to draw his sword. As he did not wish to lose the flower, he put it between his lips, but in the heat of the fight it fell to the ground. Still parrying, he bent forward to pick up the precious rose and this unexpected movement so disconcerted his adversary, that whilst the thrust shot above Narbonne's shoulder, he threw himself on to the Count's sword which

<sup>1</sup> *Memoires du Comte de Rambuteau*, p. 79.

<sup>2</sup> The Marquise de Coigny, first cousin of the Duchess de Fleury was the mistress of the Duke de Lauzun and no other than André Chénier's *Jeune Captive*. The Coignys had very accommodating principles, as may be seen from the advice given by one of them to his daughters on the occasion of their being presented at Court;—"Remember! Remember that in this world vices are of no consequence, but that a *ridicule* kills."

went through his body. He was laid up for months whereas M. de Narbonne owed his life to the flower he cherished." We can easily understand the opinion of one of Narbonne's two most intimate friends (the other was Count de Choiseul-Gouffier)<sup>1</sup> who said that no one who had not been through those days could appreciate the sweetness of life.<sup>2</sup> Very true, no doubt, but Talleyrand was forgetting a certain critical moment, when it becomes necessary to pay one's bills. Louis de Narbonne was often obliged to appeal to his mother. For a long time, she smiled indulgently on the follies of her son, treating them as the light, inevitable sins of youth. Moreover, he threw so much grace into his disorderly life and confessed his sins so frankly that it was not easy to be hard on him. But at length, after having repeatedly paid the debts of this prodigal son, Madame de Narbonne had to own that she could do it no longer, so she decided to get him married. This was in 1779 and he was 24 years of age. She had cast her eyes on the daughter of the Count d'Armaillé, whose lineage, connections, dowry

<sup>1</sup> As was the case with many young men of the time, the Count Choiseul-Gouffier, who was afterwards ambassador of Louis XVI. at Constantinople and was renowned for his Archeological studies in Greece, had in his veins the blood of the farmers-general. His mother, Marie Françoise Lallemand de Betz was the daughter of one of the richest and most unscrupulous farmers of the revenue of the middle of the eighteenth century. Another great friend of de Narbonne whose name together with those of Choiseul and Talleyrand, figures on his marriage contract. Philippe-André-Françoise de Montesquiou-Fezensac, his near relative, married Lalive, granddaughter of Madame Nettine, and thus descended on both sides from a financier's family.

<sup>2</sup> Talleyrand, the official amant of Madame de Flahaut had two other rivals: Governor Morris, minister of the United States, and Narbonne. In his last biography, M. de Maucourt relates the following anecdote. "One evening, Madame de Flahaut tells the former that with all his wit, Monsieur de Narbonne is rather a worthless fellow and very jealous, because he cannot share her good graces with his friend the Bishop of Autun. On hearing this, Morris returned home sulkily, went to bed early after noting down in his diary that the day had been "bad and rainy."

and expectations were all that could be desired. The consent of the Count de Narbonne had to be obtained and, with this end in view, she began a series of negotiations. We have not all the letters of this correspondence but those that have come down to us, give us ample information concerning the affairs of the disunited couple and those of their son. We will, therefore, quote them as far as possible, for if their letters are scarce, those in which they speak straightforwardly are few in number. During the month of September, the Count de Narbonne, who had no doubt come to Paris on account of this question, writes thus to his wife.<sup>1</sup>

"MADAME,—the only consideration that can induce me to settle my son, is the thought of the advantages which this marriage will bring him, and, as I wish as you do also, without doubt, that he should make a good thing of it, it is necessary to take time to study the proposal. Nothing is more disastrous than to be entangled in lawsuits. M. de Marcheval, Governor of Dauphiny thought his son had just made a very rich marriage. A law-suit which his father-in-law has lost, has not only stripped him of all his wealth, but has also thrown a stain upon his good name. My uncle's inheritance, which I am still endeavouring to clear, strengthens me in this opinion in consideration of which, you will understand that I ask for time to become acquainted with the fortune of a person of whom I had never heard before."<sup>2</sup>

"As my intention is to build up an establishment, I shall, as far as it is within my power, gather together my fortune and leave half of my means, as an annuity

<sup>1</sup> This first letter is merely dated "Paris, this Friday morning." As his wife's reply is dated the 18th October 1779, we may suppose that the Count's letter was written a few weeks before.

<sup>2</sup> The house of Armaillé came originally from Anjou; a Gascon, such as Monsieur de Narbonne, might easily ignore the fact.

to my eldest son, assuring all the estates to the younger. I should even like his brother to grant the estate of Aubiac to his children. I see, with grief, that this property which is in reality the family seat, is liable to be sold. Ever since it came into our hands, it has always been entailed and for that reason, it has come down to me. Through lawsuits, my father was obliged to abandon it to his creditors. I will consult my lawyers to ascertain whether I can execute what I have resolved. Unfortunately, there are very few here who know about Gascony from which county I will not separate myself. However, before busying myself with all this, I will, as soon as I am informed concerning the fortune of the young lady, go to Madame Adélaïde and propose this match to her for my son, and I shall have the honour of telling her, with my usual straightforwardness, that her bounty towards you and my son are the only motives that induce me to settle him in life.

"Considering all that I have mentioned to you above, you will notice that I shall not speak of the rightful portion in my son's marriage settlement, because, should the elder brother lose his wife, I should never sign a new contract with another one. I wish you a good journey. When you return, I shall be acquainted with M. d'——'s fortune, and we can put the finishing stroke to this affair."

After receiving this letter, Madame de Narbonne took time to consider the matter. She went to La Bove, where, as we know, she made a stay every year during the vintage season. On her return to Bellevue she replied on the 18th October:—

"MONSIEUR,—You cannot imagine the trouble I have been through since the marriage of the Chevalier<sup>1</sup> and

<sup>1</sup> Until his father was made Duke, Louis de Narbonne bore the title of chevalier (Knight).

Mademoiselle d'Armaillé has been talked of. The question is of such importance to him, that I lay the greatest value on its success. I think you have appreciated the advantages as well as I. But, a point of delicacy, which I think exaggerated, has made you wish to delay your consent. I will first assure you, most sincerely, that of all the measures that have been taken to induce you to give your consent, I have shared in one only, and that one you can easily guess. The moment has come for me to beseech you to take a decision. This is the time which you yourself appointed, as M. de Maurepas has sent word to me, for I have not even seen him on the subject. I am convinced that you must appreciate the conduct of M. d'Armaillé who might well be surprised at the indifference shown towards his daughter who is to have an income of 100,000 livres. But my son pleases him ; he is aware of his failings, and has seen that they are not to be attributed to a bad nature, but must rather be considered as the ridiculous errors of youth, which, being overcome, will give him all the more worth. I am quoting his own opinion. So much indulgence on the part of one who might be an interested party, should be a lesson to us. Do not let us be harder on him. He has not done one foolish thing within the last ten months. I may be mistaken, but I flatter myself with the idea that my gentleness, which was by no means weakness, has largely contributed to his amendment. Do not let us exasperate him at present ; his faults will be infinitely graver because there are some that can be pardoned on account of extreme youth and only on this consideration. He has no longer this excuse and we should lose him irretrievably. I know no greater misfortune than to have to be ashamed of one's children ; fortunately, his faults have not brought us to this extremity. His interest is so clearly shown in this settlement that I do not fear being suspected of having only



my own in view. But when they are both united, the latter may also be taken into consideration. I have paid all his debts save those of Gascony. It is useless to say to how much they amounted, but I find myself put to great inconvenience on their account. His maintenance, at present, no matter how economically he lives, is, considering what I have already done, beyond my means. As his wife would give him at once easy circumstances, this marriage would take this burden away from me. As, on account of the wife, they cannot have their own establishment, they will have amply all that is necessary. I shall not need to give them anything and you yourself will be relieved of the pension you allow him. Take care you make him pay all he owes in Gascony; he shall not be allowed to draw on his income before he is quite free. Considering all these details, I again request you most earnestly to give your consent. People are gossiping over all this. Do not let us be any longer a topic of conversation. In this matter, at least, let us be united. You and I have no interest in view but the welfare of our children. For God's sake, do not let yourself be hindered by any private motive. I must tell you that I have taken advice in order to know what the marriage settlement of my elder son allows me to do for the younger one. M. Bastard and Léon both said that we can now only dispose of half of our possessions; that all my acquisitions, whatever they may be, must be included in the distribution, but that it would be possible, in order to avoid further divisions and discussions when signing the marriage settlement, if both sons consent, to induce the one to take the estates in Gascony and the other those situated elsewhere, with the condition that, if we wish to divide them in equal parts, the son who has received a larger portion should make amends to the other. This is the only way for us to remain masters of our fortune, since we are not at

liberty to take or dispose of it as we will. With regard to this, Monsieur, you have only to decide as you wish, but, I beseech you to answer yes or no."

These explanations seem to have had their effect. That the Count de Narbonne relaxed may be seen by the following note which is in his handwriting, but is neither signed nor dated.

"As I have always said, I shall see with the greatest satisfaction the marriage of my son with Mademoiselle d'Ar—— and my only reason for delaying my decision was to give the two parties time to know each other better and thus assure their happiness. I will authorize his mother to grant him, by the marriage settlement, whatever she may wish, and I will make over to my elder son, at the hour of my death, all my remaining goods, reserving for myself the power to sell without making any substitution; and all the said possessions which I shall leave on my death will be entailed on the younger brother and his children. As I am settling my possessions on my eldest son, so as to allow his mother to favour the younger son, in order to give the same security to his settlement, I beg M. d'Ar—— to remember that in the event of his daughter being deprived of part of the gifts he grants her, either by some custom of the country or for any other reason, whatever be wanting be ascribed to his other property or to one in particular. I hold to the contract being drawn up according to the written law; because my own, that of my elder son and all those of my family having been drawn up in Paris, there can arise no difficulty from the various laws of different parts of the country, if his be made there. As the possibility of death is always considered in this sort of contract, and as that of the husband is foreseen by the constitution of a dowry, we will ask that a pension be settled on the future

husband, as it is customary in the written law as an indemnity for the expense of his establishment."

To this the Countess replied :—

" I never attributed your hesitation to any other cause but to your desire to assure his happiness and that of the one he is to marry. The same tender feeling which, in my case, is perhaps connected with a more interested motive, made me fear missing an opportunity which it will not be easy to find again. What I thought it my duty to do, in order to prevent my son being dishonoured by his debts, has made it impossible for me to provide him with that which, in his position, is absolutely necessary. His disorder has been great, but I am sure that he has made no more debts since Lyons. Last year, on his return, I hoped that he had finished with his errors, because by dint of friendship, I induced him to confess all his follies. I am sure that the only remaining debts are those he owes in Gascony, and of which I have the items at Versailles, he will certainly show them to you, if you request him to, as I did—and those owed to his valet, which I regret as much as you, but which I was obliged to let stand as it was impossible for me to pay them at the time. No doubt, it would have been well for him if he had been trained by you to be orderly, but I hope that what he has gone through will make up for whatever has been wanting in this respect in his education.<sup>1</sup> I have paid everything else—you may be reassured on this point. I have had too many occasions to appreciate the friendship of the Bishop of Evreux, not to feel sure that he will come to my aid when I shall ask him. Therefore, *Monsieur*, you need have no fear concerning the past. I have paid for it. He will henceforth be able to provide decently for whatever is necessary to his

<sup>1</sup> Without examining this sentence very closely, it is easy to discover the wilful irony it contains, and to deduct from it the cause, or at least one of the causes, of the disagreement between husband and wife.

condition. You say that you wish he had some money set aside, but how could he economize since he had nothing? I am not surprised that M——'s agent should have rejected your proposal of an advance of 100,000 livres. It is not customary. I even think that you thereby showed your son under a very unfavourable light, for it was publishing that he was hard pressed and that he did not even deserve to be helped by his father and mother, which must appear very serious in the eyes of his father-in-law. But, *Monsieur*, if his debts alone make you hesitate, I can rely on my brother-in-law. Thus you may proceed. If you have come to a decision I should like the matter to be settled promptly. It has been talked about for so long a time, it would be well to put an end to it. I think, with all respect for your opinion, that it would be well not to insist too much on some matters with M. d'A——. He appears to be very fond of his daughter. Nevertheless, it may be dangerous to irritate one who can dispose of a great portion of his fortune and who will find, consequently, many people willing to suggest the idea to him."

The negotiations went on and they exchanged their views on what articles were to be inserted in the marriage settlement. We have but one short note written by the Count de Narbonne, referring to these details:—

"PARIS, *this Monday morning.*

"What I wrote to you is no pretext. You may reply to M. d'Ar—— that I have given you my word if he guarantees the 55,000 livres in such a way that should Madame d'Ar—— die and her husband marry again, this second marriage should not affect the gift. It appears to me that you cannot think otherwise on this matter, and that we shall be of one mind, at least, on this point."

(Signed)

"NARBONNE."

"Have you taken advice from a sensible man? Have you told him about your position and your fortune? I repeat that I leave the whole matter in your hands, relying on your honour and conscience."

Up till this date it would seem that the Count de Narbonne had only caught a glimpse of Mademoiselle d'Armaillé, and when he saw her more closely when visiting her parents, he recoiled in horror.

"PARIS, 6th November 1779.

"I received your letter, Madame, at the very moment when I was about to write to you concerning a call which I made yesterday, to Madame d'Armaillé, where I found my son. Three or four days before, I had presented myself at her house, she was at home, but had closed her door to all visitors. On the morrow, she sent word to me, expressing her regret, and consequently I felt myself obliged to make a second visit. The future bride appeared to me worse than ever. She has become hideous! Can we really encourage such a union? What will you do with such a fright? Will you dare to show her at Court, where, I hear, you mean to find her a post? She will make a nice lady of the Bedchamber when Madame de Beauvilliers fails, as she will certainly before long. I can find, and so could you, a pretty and agreeable young lady possessing an income of 20 to 25 thousand livres, which my son could enjoy at once, besides the 12,000 livres given by the Bishop of Evreux and what he gets from his post. Thus, from the day of his marriage he would have the same position as with Mlle. d'—. He will not have, it is true, such sure prospects; but these would have to be too dearly bought. I cannot understand you, for certainly my son will never dare to approach her or else she will bear him little monsters. Have you seen her? I beg of you to look at her once

more and not to answer me before having done so. How pleased I am not to have hastened on to a decision. In spite of my<sup>1</sup> misgivings, you made me consent to the marriage of my eldest son. How grieved you should be to have tried once more to force my will in this case. If it turns out badly, as it cannot fail to happen, it will be giving me a pistol shot.<sup>2</sup> I do beseech you to consult some worthy person. The matter is of such importance that it is absolutely necessary. I am sure that he will tell you to retract. I can easily find a pretext in settling the money matters by asking such a large sum in case my son should outlive his wife, that the father will refuse. He is not here. Moreau<sup>3</sup> came here this morning and said there was no reply, but that he was expecting one, this will give us both time to reflect. I tell you that my mind is made up, nevertheless, I will do as you please. You alone will bear the responsibility, and that is as it should be, since, against my will, you will have taken all on your own shoulders. You were amazed that I should ask for 100,000 livres? Pray tell me, does any father get his daughter married in Paris without giving a sum to cover the debts of the husband or of his family? I will readily give up all that may come from her, for what can compensate me, if I sacrifice my son and my house! If you still persist in making this match, do not, at least, show this letter to my son for fear of making him disgusted with his future wife. That will come only too soon!"

<sup>1</sup> No doubt the cause of the grief of the Count de Narbonne was to be found in the fact that his daughter-in-law, the Viscountess, had not yet any children after being married for eight years.

<sup>2</sup> These words spring evidently from a father's heart. This correspondence, in which we see the Count de Narbonne vieing with the Countess in affection towards their son Louis, appears to us the most eloquent argument against the stories told about the supposed illegitimate birth of the latter.

<sup>3</sup> Count d'Armaillé's lawyer.

We have not the reply of the Countess, nor yet that of the Count, for, at this critical moment, their letters cross each other hurriedly as both became more obdurate and determined in their decision.

On the 9th November Monsieur de Narbonne takes once more his pen, and writes to his wife :—

“ Your letter, Madame, which you sent by a footman was so urgent and pressing that I thought it best to reply in the same way, and it did not take me more than a minute. Nearly six months ago, when my son brought me an account of the possessions of the father, he said that he wanted to assure two estates, one worth 22, and the other worth 35. A few days ago, when settling this matter with M. Moreau, attorney acting for M. d’Armaillé, and in presence of my brother and M. de Maranges,<sup>1</sup> I saw by the deeds which you have had drawn up, and which my son had shown me the day before, that the two estates, which were to be settled, were situated in a country where common law obtains. We therefore agreed, unanimously, that, in the event of his daughter ever being evicted, M. d’Armaillé should grant this settlement on the remainder of his possessions. Since then, Moreau says that he has had no reply from the father. I do not know whether all his property is, as you mention to me, situated in the same way. This consideration makes me decide not to hear any more on the matter, unless he consents to turn his lands into money, so that this settlement may be secured. You never speak to me but of the young lady’s face. • Her figure afflicts me much more, and, in your place, I would have requested the mother to show her body to me. The house of Gesvres<sup>2</sup> will long regret having debased their race. Ill-looks are

<sup>1</sup> Officer attached to the household of Madame Adélaïde.

<sup>2</sup> It is well known that in the eighteenth century several members of the house of Gesvres were sickly and deformed.

nothing in comparison with this defect. In one of your letters you write to me that I had offered your place to Mademoiselle de Saint Chamans in order to marry her to my son. Nothing could be more false. Shortly after my arrival in Paris, M. Demazières came and made this proposal to me, saying that, in the event, she would live with me. . . . I told him at once that I had not yet thought of getting my son married; but, if it were so, I should wish her (the wife) to be near you. Abbé Gaston sees a great deal of M. Mazières. He can tell you whether I ever spoke of your place. I may tell you that I have never wished to mix myself up in what is yours, and you may be assured that I have not changed. We should not be as we are if you had shared my way of thinking and, certainly, I have never sought to despoil you, and I might even have taken my revenge if I had been capable of entertaining such a thought. Be assured that you will never be as fortunate as I wish you to be and that you have no reason to distrust me as you have always done. I rejoice in your good fortune as though it befell me.<sup>1</sup>

"P.S.—They still wish to deduct 200,000 livres on these two estates. My son had not said a word to me about it. I will not reply to the remainder of your letter, I hope you will, one day, think very differently and that you will own that I have never desired anything but the welfare of my family. I should be a monster if it were otherwise."

The Countess de Narbonne failed to overcome her husband's opposition. And yet, if this marriage did not come off, how would it be possible to finish paying off

<sup>1</sup> In the uncertainty that prevails concerning the cause of the separation of the Count and the Countess, we can but endeavour to seize whatever slight tokens may come before us. In this respect the above passage may be significant. It seems to indicate that the origin of their quarrel was merely a question of interest or wounded vanity, and thus the legend concerning the birth of the Knight is once more proved to be fictitious.



the Chevalier's debts, and afterwards how was he to be provided for! She herself had exhausted her last resources and the father was both incapable and unwilling to come to the rescue. Would it then be necessary to appeal to Madame Adélaïde! Considering all that the Princess had already done for her, would Madame de Narbonne dare to petition in favour of her son. Besides, by refusing his consent, had not the Count sought chiefly to give himself the pleasure of mortifying her? For, if Mademoiselle d'Armaillé had really been such a "fright," would not Madame de Narbonne have noticed it herself and before he did? Was she a mother who would throw her favourite son into the arms of a "monster?" But for a curious document found amongst her papers, we could not guess to what extent these thoughts irritated Madame de Narbonne. It consists in the draft of letters-patent tending to proceed, in spite of the father's refusal, and to convoke an assembly of all their relations before which the Count should expound his motives; and then, after due examination of the minutes of the meeting, the Grand Chamber of Parliament was to decide whether the marriage should take place, if the family council so advised, although the father still withheld his consent and refused to attend the meeting.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, in spite of Madame de Narbonne's anger, this matrimonial scheme was not to be realized. After duly reflecting, did the Countess prefer to give it up rather than expose herself to the scandal which would be made about a marriage that had been settled by the Courts of Justice? Or did the d'Armaillé feel themselves slighted by so many tergiversations and release the Narbonne family from their word? It is impossible to say. But certainly the mother did not give up the idea of getting her son well married. She

<sup>1</sup> The draft of these letters-patent and the correspondence of the Count and Countess de Narbonne concerning the d'Armaillé marriage are kept in the *Archives nationales*, Letter T. 1496.

devoted herself to this scheme more assiduously than ever, hoping, perhaps, that the married state would steady this inconstant butterfly and, what was more likely, would spare her the humiliation of begging for help from Madame Adélaïde.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> On the 27th May 1781, Marie Adélaïde Camille de La Forest d'Armaillé married François Artus Hyacinthe Timoléon, Count de Cassé, younger son of René Hugues Timoléon, Count de Cassé, and of Marie Anne Hocquart. I cannot say whether this is the person whom Madame de Narbonne had chosen for her son, but her Christian name makes us rather inclined to believe that she was the godchild of the princess, on whom Madame de Narbonne attended. If this be the case, it would seem likely that Madame Adélaïde herself first suggested this match which failed, as she prepared the marriage of Louis de Narbonne with another Marie Adélaïde, probably another of her godchildren.

## CHAPTER VI

### MARRIAGE OF LOUIS DE NARBONNE

**W**HILST Madame de Narbonne was painfully scheming in Paris an alliance with the d'Armaillé family, on the other side of the world, at San Domingo, an old planter, the son of other planters, who had settled long ago on the island, closed his eyes for ever. His real name was simply Fournier, but without disowning his father's name, he allowed himself to be called M. Fournier de la Chapelle, no doubt in order to distinguish him from his brother, M. Fournier de Varenne. For many years he had grown the sugar-cane and thus amassed a large fortune which enabled his daughter, the wife of President de Montholon, to make a fine appearance at the head of the Parliament of Rouen, whilst in a very few years his son, M. de la Chapelle, Master of the Court of Requests, squandered away over a million in gold, keeping company with rakes and notorious women. At San Domingo, old Fournier farmed two settlements and their dependencies. The one situated at Limonade was called Grande Place, and comprised the savannah of that name and the Bluff of Bellevue; the other, which was called Petite Place included Moka-Neuf and the storehouses of Saint-Suzanne, all of which were situated in the north of the island near French Cape. On his death these estates were valued at 3,100,000 livres. By his will he had appointed the Marquis de la Chapelle, his elder son, and Madame de Montholon, his residuary legatees, cutting off the Master of the Court of Requests with 500,000 livres on account of his dissipa-

tion.<sup>1</sup> The Marquis received as his share the settlement of Limonade and its dependencies. Madame de Montholon inherited Fossé and all that belonged to this estate. When these arrangements had been made, the President and his wife found themselves, in 1781, at the head of estates in America worth 1,076,188 francs and 572,310 livres in France, which made a total income of 122,803 francs.<sup>2</sup>

Nicholas de Montholon, born in Paris on the 6th December 1736, had been made First President of the Parliament of Rouen on the 20th December 1774, after the resignation of Hue de Miromesnil whom the King had appointed Keeper of the Seals.<sup>3</sup> In 1776 he had married Charlotte Marie Laurence Marguerite Fournier de la Chapelle, and in the following year, on the 11th October, a daughter, Marie Adélaïde was born; she seems to have been their only child, or at all events, the only surviving one. From what has just been said concerning her parents' wealth, it may be seen that Mademoiselle de Montholon, an only child, was what may be called a good match. Through the medium of Madame Adélaïde of France who was his godmother, and perhaps also that of the young lady, Louis de Narbonne asked for her hand in the month of January 1782. President de Montholon who had been dazzled by the high fortune of his predecessor, aspired to appear on a scene that was more worthy of his talents than the town of Rouen. He reflected that

<sup>1</sup> The 500,000 livres bequeathed to the Master of the Court of Requests were entailed on his children (if he married) and on those of the Marquis de la Chapelle and of Madame de Montholon. Reduction being made of what he owed his father, he received 375,000 livres only. In order to meet his other debts his brother and sister were obliged to lay out another 500,000 livres, and their only guarantee was to obtain the grant of his charge which amounted to 100,000 livres. By way of compensation they served him an annuity to which the wife of the president contributed 2,500 livres as her share.

<sup>2</sup> *Arch. Nat.* (Record Office), Letter T. 568 and 1089.

<sup>3</sup> Archives of the Department of Seine-Inférieure.

Madame de Narbonne had just been made Duchess, that she was lady-in-waiting to the King's Aunt, who showed her the greatest favour. True, the son was somewhat dissipated, but then he was so clever, so fascinating and so full of promise! He eagerly accepted Madame Adélaïde's proposal and the ceremony was performed in Paris on the 16th of the following April, in the Chapel of the Nesle Mansion, parish of Saint Sulpice. The marriage settlement was signed on the eve of the wedding, in presence of the father and mother of the future bride; it is more worthy of note<sup>1</sup> that the father and mother of the groom were also present.<sup>2</sup> This apparent reconcilia-

<sup>1</sup> This is how the President replied to the Princess :—

"MADAME,

"Nothing could honour or flatter us more than to have attracted the attention of Madame in the question of a marriage in which she takes an interest. Nothing could give us a surer guarantee of the qualities that will make this marriage, which Madame does us the honour of desiring, a happy one, than the bounty with which she honours us by making the demand herself. Our respect, our devotion and our wish to please Madame, bid us to comply with the desire of Madame. I would not have delayed going at once to Madame, but that the King's service prevented me. Count de la Rivière has kindly undertaken to explain to Madame the reasons that render my presence here necessary, and I hope they will win for me some claim to the honour of enjoying the esteem and benevolence of Madame. Unless Madame sees fit to call me to her sooner, I cannot be in Paris before the 8th February, at which date the sittings of Parliament are suspended until Ash-Wednesday. During this interval I shall be entirely at your command, and Madame de Montholon and I will express to you once more that this marriage which you desire for my daughter is not only agreeable to us in all respects, but also dear to us on account of the bounty with which Madame honours the family of M. de Narbonne, and which she has deigned to promise to bestow on my family and of which we hope to show ourselves most particularly worthy. We have the honour of being, with the deepest respect, the most humble servants of Madame.

"First President de Montholon,

"FOURNIER DE MONTHOLON"

"ROUEN, 23rd January 1782.

"PARIS, 24th January 1782."

<sup>2</sup> The other witnesses were, for the groom: his brother, Viscount de Narbonne: his uncles, the Bishop of Evreux, Abbé de St Sernin,

tion was merely a matter of decorum; the Duke and Duchess of Narbonne separated immediately after the wedding and I do not know that they ever met again.

The Duchess de Narbonne granted to her son half of her possessions at the hour of her death, intending to give him the whole estate and barony of La Bove, as well as the estate and manor house of Juvincourt. She reserved the usufruct of this donation. She immediately made over to him, on his wedding-day, the life annuity of 11,200 livres, which according to letters-patent of 12th June 1771, had been granted to her and her son by the Royal Commissioners and was drawn from the so-called Dutch Loan.

A cousin of the bridegroom, Countess de Beaumont, who was lady-in-waiting to Madame, Countess de Provence, granted him 60,000 livres at the moment of her death.

As for the bridegroom himself, he contributed a pension of 2,652 livres which the King had granted him on 1st December 1779, and 1,800 livres, his pay as second colonel of the regiment of Angoumois.

Madame Adélaïde attached the husband to her person by naming him gentleman-in-waiting—(until the death of Baron de Montmorency in 1785 he had only the reversion of this post) and supplied the bride with a place as lady-in-attendance on her sister, Madame Victoire.

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François de Montlezun, commander of the Citadel of Marseilles; his first cousin, Philippe André François de Montesquiou Fezensac, Captain of the Dragoons; his second cousin, Count de Flamarens, Grand-Master of the wolf-hunt of France; and his friends, Marie Gabriel Florent Auguste de Choiseul-Gouffier, Colonel of Dragoons, Charles Maurice de Talleyrand-Perigord. On the side of the bride were: The Attorney-General of the Audit Office of Paris; the Grand Dean of the Chapter of Metz, Count de Montholon, Colonel of the Infantry, all three her uncles by her father's side; Jean Jacques Fournier de la Chapelle, her uncle on her mother's side; two other Montholons, and one Fournier, all her cousins.

### 34 VICISSITUDES OF A LADY-IN-WAITING

As a dowry, Madame de Montholon gave her daughter an income of 20,000 livres, free of all dues, besides half of all the estates forming her inheritance, including the settlement of Fossé at San Domingo. As Mademoiselle de Montholon was an only child, the greater part of the other half of her mother's property was to come to her on the death of the latter.<sup>1</sup>

In the same year, shortly after the wedding, President de Montholon was called to the King's Council (Chamber of Commerce). No doubt this had been tacitly implied in the contract. He left Rouen and settled in Paris where he made the architect Soufflot build him a sumptuous mansion on the Boulevard Poissonnière. This building cost him a great deal, in fact so much that, although he had built it for his own use, it was scarcely finished when he was obliged to put it up for sale.<sup>2</sup> If we are to heed the Chronicle, in the following year he threw himself into a plot against the Lord Keeper, urged on, no doubt, by Madame de Narbonne, who hoped that if Miromesnil were disgraced, the father-in-law of her son would obtain his place. Amongst Madame de Narbonne's papers there is a letter written to Madame Adélaïde by M. de Montholon. He complains bitterly of the Keeper of the Seals whom he accuses of not having endorsed a petition which he sent in to the King, and which the King refused to grant. It is therefore certain that there was a coolness between the two magistrates, and it is more than likely that Montholon would have seen with pleasure the fall of Miromesnil. It is in the nature of human sentiments that, as he had taken the place of Miromesnil as first President of the Magistracy of Normandy, he should think

<sup>1</sup> *Arch. Nat.*, T. 568.

<sup>2</sup> *Arch. Nat.* (Public Record Office), Letter T. 1089. (Letter of Madame de Montholon dated 29th October 1788). This mansion cost one million and only fetched 340,000 francs (*Memoirs of Count de Rambuteau*, p. 23). All that remains of it is a portion at right angles with the rue St Flacre.



MARIE-ADÉLAÏDE DE MONTHOLON, COMTESSE DE NARBONNE-LARA  
*From a pastel by Mme. Vigée-Lebrun*





himself, however mistakenly, fit to replace him at the head of the magistracy of the whole Kingdom. But, with the exception of a few lines from the newsmongers of the day, nothing shows that Madame de Narbonne abetted his ambitious plans. Until we have more ample information, we may consider this as another tale set going on account of the relative positions of the two parties concerned, and which it was easier to invent than to prove.<sup>1</sup>

At the time of her marriage, Mademoiselle de Montholon was only fourteen-and-a-half years of age. She was a mere child who was in a convent up to the eve of her wedding, and thus she appears to us in the pastel portrait which has been attributed, perhaps erroneously, to Madame Vigée-Lebrun. In it we see "Marie Adélaïde de Montholon, Countess de Narbonne Lara,"<sup>2</sup> sitting on the very edge of a small armchair, her small fingers run over the strings of a small harp and her small mouth is half open as though she were singing some little ballad.<sup>3</sup> The same picture rises before us when reading a certain number of letters which she wrote to her husband and her mother-in-law when either she or they were on some of their frequent journeys. It is true that these letters loose part of their sense, because scarcely one of them is dated. Nevertheless we see that she is affectionate and unsophisticated; she appears to be very grateful towards the Duchess and most devoted to her husband. As she reveals herself to us, she supplies a few essential

<sup>1</sup> *Arch. Nat.*, T. 568. *Bachaumont*, vol. xxii., pp. 349 and 356. Three years later the same chronicler associates M. de Montholon with a new affair. A pamphlet against the Lord Keeper (vol. xxx., p. 151). In the *Arch. Nat.* (T. 1089) there are a certain number of business letters written by Nicolas de Montholon to the steward of his wife's property in San Domingo. They do not give us a very high opinion of his mind nor his abilities. This impression seems to corroborate the opinion of *Bachaumont's* successors.

<sup>2</sup> These words are engraved on the frame.

<sup>3</sup> *Memoirs of Count de Rambuteau*, p. 22.

traits to what we already know about her mother-in-law and Count Louis. The reader will therefore welcome a few samples of this correspondence.

On the 25th May 1786 the Countess de Narbonne gave birth to her first child—a daughter. The following letter appears to have been written at the beginning of her pregnancy :—

“ Monsieur de Narbonne gave you news about me yesterday, my dear Mamma. It was fairly good. Nevertheless I fainted, but nobody was alarmed. This morning I made great efforts, but only threw up water. But no one appeared to have pity for my condition. I hope that on your return there will be no longer any doubt as to my condition, and, whilst awaiting a grandson, you will see a child who loves you well and who is much indebted to you for making her so happy in every way. You have overwhelmed her with kindness, and she finds in you a tender mother. You have given her a husband who is the best and most amiable person in the world. What should she desire but to be always worthy of the tender friendship which you bestow on her? Good-bye my dear Mamma, do not send that amiable husband to me again; I should go mad after him. He sacrificed his amusement in order to remain in the sad company of a poor forsaken invalid who loves you with all her heart.

“ I can but be keenly alive to the goodness of Madame Adélaïde. I fear it would be presumptuous to dare to say that I am longing for her return, and that I love her with all my heart. But she is so good to me that this consideration may excuse my temerity. In short, Mamma, find some way of expressing to her all my gratitude for the bounties she bestows on me.”

Business matters having called the Duchess de Narbonne to Riom, she received there several letters from her

daughter-in-law who was detained at Bellevue in attendance on Madame Victoire. The principal interest of the following is to be found in the post scriptum :—

“Good morning my dear little Mamma! Are you still angry with me? Will you forgive me for having been so lazy? I was severely punished by receiving such a short letter from you and I promise you it will not occur again. I am going to Paris to-morrow to take a slight remedy and I shall return to meet you. I suppose you will reappear at Bellevue next week. You have been away for centuries and it grieves me very much. I am waiting impatiently for the time when I shall be able to embrace you and tell you that I love you with all my heart. Your granddaughter and your child beg you not to prolong your stay at Riom. It is impossible to be more amiable than she is. She bursts out into peals of laughter.”

This post scriptum is not signed, but seems to be in Madame Adélaïde's handwriting :—

“Some one who prides herself on being one of the persons who knows best how to appreciate the Duchess de Narbonne, begs her to receive with some interest the assurance of her tender and sincere devotion. She will be much distressed if, in spite of the expression of these sentiments, you do not recognize the writer. The little Countess and Mademoiselle her daughter are well and are getting on marvellously.”

When the Count de Narbonne was named Colonel of the Piedmontese regiment, his wife, the young Countess accompanied him to Besançon where he kept garrison. From this town she wrote a certain number of letters to her mother-in-law. We will quote a few.

" BESANÇON, *this 2nd.*

" Here I am at last, my dear little Mamma, after having encountered every possible danger, for which I alone am responsible. Our second night was to have been spent at Langres, but Count Louis having threatened to leave me in order to arrive just in time for the parade, I was so upset by this that I began to choke and was obliged, much against my will, to go to bed in an ugly inn where the nasty Count took advantage of my being asleep and left me. I took it rather ill of him. However, I forgive him now since I am still alive, which I little expected at . . . (?) I have not yet been to many entertainments, because I only arrived yesterday at five o'clock. Nevertheless Count Louis made me receive the visit of the grenadiers who made me a very charming speech. Then he obliged me to kiss the orator. I have been promised a great deal of amusement for to-day :—

" 1° the colours.

" 2° visit of the officers of the regiment.

" 3° I shall spend the afternoon making calls myself. This is the exact account of all the entertainments that have been given in my honour. Nevertheless I fear that I shall not get off so easily on the following days.

" I have given you a long and tedious account, my dear Mamma ; I fear that you have accustomed me to having too good an opinion of myself and so persuaded me that I do not weary you by talking about myself, but as there must be a limit to all things, I will put off to another day the account of all that happens to the two people in whom you are interested and who will always feel it a duty and a pleasure to give you tokens of their affection and to repeat to you often that they love you.

" The Chevalier begs me to assure you that your

*third child*<sup>1</sup> is not the one who loves you least, and that he will vie with us in expressing and proving his devotedness to you.

"My address is the old Intendant's Office at Besançon.

"P.S.—Dear Mamma, will you lay my respects at the feet of Madame Adélaïde, and tell her that Count Louis quarrels with me because he wants to write to her.

"When the next courier leaves, we will make the exchange and he will tell you that I love you, for to-day I am to express to you his tenderness and the sincerity of his feelings towards you."

Countess Louise left Besançon to drink the waters at Plombières. On the eve of her departure she wrote to the Duchess :—

"BESANÇON, *this 15th.*

"Your letter, my dear Mamma, is most sweet and amiable. It is a very great pleasure for me to deserve a few such as this. I intend to go soon to meet Madame de Rochelambert. I hope my journey will be as fortunate as the one I already made. However, people alarm me very much about the roads. They even say it would be more prudent to travel in a litter from Luxeuil to Plombières; but I hope that the bright sunshine which has prevailed for the last three days will spare my travelling in such a tiresome way. I believe Count Louis will accompany me to the end of my journey, but as Monsieur du Lau has not said how much leave he means to grant

<sup>1</sup> This "Chevalier" appears frequently in the letters which Madame de Narbonne sends to her mother-in-law, and each time he is spoken of as the "third child" of the Duchess. Although various authors have attributed three and even four children (one a daughter) to the Duchess of Narbonne, I myself do not believe that she had ever more than two. For instance, her sister-in-law the nun, has been taken for her daughter, and a member of the Narbonne de Nescus branch was thought to be her son. The "Chevalier" here mentioned is no doubt a young cousin whom Louis de Narbonne had with him in his regiment.

him, I am trembling lest he should upset my plans. His severity is unequalled, besides he is so pleased to be called "*mon général*" that he would not like one voice to fail to utter a name that is so dear to his ear.

"You ask me for details about the mustachio of the grenadier whom I kissed? The pity is that he had none. His complexion was fresh and he was newly shaved, but I cannot say how many minutes had elapsed since he had last smoked. I will most certainly send you their address. You will perhaps know better than I the princes who have sighed after me and whom I have crushed by my harshness.

"Yesterday I received a letter from Madame Adélaïde. Far or near, the Princess is always as kind to me, and I love her very tenderly. . . .

"The fine weather that we have enjoyed for the last few days has allowed me to visit the sights of Besançon. Three days ago I went to the Bout du Monde.<sup>1</sup> (End of the World). In order to gain access to it one is almost obliged to swim, or at least, to cross many little streams into which one falls when one is as clumsy as Countess Louise. The spot can only be reached by climbing several mountains on foot. But one is well rewarded for one's pains by the view of a superb waterfall that falls from a height of over one hundred feet, without speaking of many other smaller ones that spring from different parts of the rock. People go and stand beneath an arch that re-echoes with the sound of falling water. This is the most remarkable place I have seen. When I shall have made some new discoveries I will tell you about them.

"Good-bye, my little Mamma, to-night I am leaving for Plombières and I love you with all my heart."

The following note which the young Countess sends to her husband seems to have been written at Plombières:—

<sup>1</sup> Sort of amphitheatre formed by a mountain above which rises the Chapel des Buis. Bout du Monde is a favourite excursion; it lies four kilometres from Besançon, between Beure and Arguel.

"My friend writes the prettiest letters in the world. It is a pity that they are so short, for one has great pleasure in reading them. I am not complaining, for I know that he steals a moment from his pleasure to shut himself up sadly and tell his wife that he still remembers her. On the contrary, I am most grateful to him for sending me every second day the essays of his pen, which would be abandoned to the flames if he did not remember the pleasure which a certain forsaken Louise<sup>1</sup> feels each time when she reads and reads again the four lines traced by the hand of him whom she loves, on paper that is sufficiently small for the inscription not to appear ridiculous. Adieu, my friend, I fear that you may have intended to give me a lesson and I wish to show you that I have profited by it.

"Would you believe, my friend, that foolishly I was going to close my letter without telling you that I love you? You would have thought me mad and have found me very impertinent to dare to complain of your goodness in writing to me very regularly. I hope you will forgive me, and you will remember that during your absence I have no other consolation but to receive your letters often and somewhat longer epistles.

"Adieu my friend, this time quite for good. I will tell you, nevertheless, that I spent part of the day in bed on account of a bad headache, pains in my ear, that old sore throat that persists in remaining, and above all, pains in my back. Adieu you amiable creature, do not forget the one who loves you."

We might produce a number of other letters, but these will, no doubt, amply suffice to give us an idea of her character, her feelings, and on what terms she was with

<sup>1</sup> As we have seen Mademoiselle de Montholon's Christian name was Marie Adélaïde. When she became the wife of *Louis de Narbonne*, her friends took the habit of calling her Countess Louise.



her husband and mother-in-law. If we were to believe Mercy Argenteau, Madame de Boigne and others, the elder Madame de Narbonne would appear to us as a crabbed, imperious and wily woman, but as far as we can judge by what we see of her in her daughter-in-law's letters, she seems to have been a kind and cheerful person, very capable of calling forth in others sincere gratitude and tender affection. Such feelings between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law are not frequently met with. Since the little Countess felt them, may we not suppose that the Duchess fully deserved them? On the other hand, we dare not assert that the Count was quite worthy of his wife's devotion. In this respect, as in the case of the marriage settlement, the shares were obviously unequal. The Count appeared like a demi-god to his wife, and his worship threatened to unhinge her mind. The Countess was to him an agreeable little doll who from time to time afforded him amusement, but who wearied him far more frequently, and whom he hastened to leave when he could to enjoy other more intoxicating pleasures, bestowing on her the while the outward care of the most devoted of husbands.<sup>1</sup>

This passion for pleasure which his mother had fondly hoped to quench by getting him married, seems, on the contrary, to have received a fresh stimulus. It took such proportions that in no time he was once more head over heels in debt. In this wild, giddy course, he soon brought

<sup>1</sup> One of the most characteristic features of the morals of Society during this period was that a husband should appear all the more attentive and eager towards his wife when his infidelity was notorious. It was a sort of point of honour, a sign of good-breeding, a tribute to the one who perpetuated the race and name. No one equalled Louis de Narbonne in this art. Nowadays we would call this sheer hypocrisy. We would perhaps be mistaken, for no one was deceived, and as we may see by the gentle irony of the little Countess's last letter, she was not more taken in than others. We must consider it as something quite different, something that cannot be easily defined because, as it did not last in our morals, it has left no name in our language.

the Montholons to bay, and their correspondence with San Domingo is one constant call for funds.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps their heads had been turned by their daughter's brilliant marriage or they had ruined themselves by building their mansion on the boulevard, or pledged themselves too heavily towards the creditors of their brother La Chapelle, or those of their son-in-law. Turning a deaf ear to their real interests, they refused to spend any money in improving the plantation or to make any arrangements that might bring profit to their neighbours. They saw snares everywhere and confined themselves to making only the unavoidable repairs. The one important point was that the steward should send them much sugar and as often as possible. The steward multiplied his expeditions, but, being hurried and bustled, he had not time to look after the packing, consequently the goods were often damaged, losing part of their value, and at Bordeaux the sheriff's officers who were on the look-out, seized the bales as they were unloaded. In this way a very small portion of the proceeds of the sale came eventually into the hands of the owners.<sup>2</sup> Madame de Montholon, subject to apoplectic fits, did not long withstand such shocks. She died in December 1788. Then the discussions on money-matters began between father-in-law and son-in-law. They had

<sup>1</sup> From a letter written 29th October 1788 by Madame de Montholon to the attorney of the San Domingo settlement it appears that the couple were in very straitened circumstances. "After having disclosed to you by this letter our distress which is, unfortunately, but too real, and which I beg of you to remedy as far as it is within your power, I must also give you the one consoling hope which remains to us, in order to give you the heart and courage which you will need. The enormous sums spent on my mansion have brought us into these straits of which I have told you but one quarter. Well, I am trying to sell it. I am offering it at 300,000 francs less than it really cost me. If I succeed, I shall no longer grind down my estates as I am obliged to in the present state of affairs, on the contrary, I promise to give you all the funds to draw from my estate all that can be reasonably expected from it." (*Arch. Nat.*, T. 1089).

<sup>2</sup> *Arch. Nat.*, T. 1089.

to plead in order to come to a compromise.<sup>1</sup> No purchaser appeared for the mansion on the Boulevard Poissonnière. In the meanwhile the young Countess de Narbonne took within her feeble hands the direction of the San Domingo estates which now belonged to her. But, while she sent her instructions to Bordeaux or to the Isles, her husband wrote his from far-off garrisons, from Strasbourg, from Neu Breisach or elsewhere, and, as we may guess, his orders consisted in demands for money either without the knowledge of his wife or against her will. Their correspondents, finding themselves between two fires, did not know whom to obey.<sup>2</sup> The Revolution soon arrived and with it the rising of the niggers in San Domingo. At the very beginning of the revolt, the settlement of Fossé, which represented the greater part

<sup>1</sup> Letter written by Countess Louis to her steward in San Domingo, 5th November 1790. (*Arch. Nat.*, T. 1089). No doubt Count Louis de Narbonne refers to these discussions in one of his letters to his mother. After saying that he has some bothers in his service and that he is about to take his wife again to Plombières, he adds:—"You see, Mamma, that to public misfortunes, private vexations are added, and it is really one to be obliged to quit the Countess through whom I continue to be very happy. *I hope her father will no longer prevent my being so.*" (*Arch. Nat.*, T. 1068).

<sup>2</sup> On the 12th September 1791, Narbonne writes to Delorthe, their correspondent at Bordeaux:—

"Madame de Narbonne and I have not always been able to agree because we were at 300 leagues from each other, and our letters may have been lost. But, as I am now in France, you will understand, Sir, that it is more suitable for you to deal with me. I therefore request you to execute punctually whatever I may command; and you may be sure that Madame de Narbonne will not disapprove, since she only wrote to you directly according to my decisions."

Delorthe replies eight days later:—

"It would be very necessary, Sir, that you should have the goodness to concert with Madame de Narbonne with regard to the disposal of the produce of this remittance, as I have already had the honour of mentioning to you that she ordered me to refer to her only concerning the affairs of her settlement" (*Arch. Nat.*, T. 1089).

of their fortune, was destroyed.<sup>1</sup> But even if the Revolution had not taken place and the niggers of San Domingo had never stirred, the ruin of the Montholons must fatally have arrived. It is one of the episodes of the ruin of Society of the time,—ruin which in every case may be attributed to the same causes. By his own labour, his foresight, his spirit of order and economy, Fournier de La Chapelle had amassed great wealth. Even before his death the disorderly life of his son swallowed up a great part of his fortune. When old Fournier disappeared, the estates in America were given over, come what may, to the management of a stranger, a hired steward whose one idea was to secure, first of all, his own salary. Then Louis de Narbonne appeared—one might as well say a pike let loose in pond—and he undertook to devour by himself what remained. Once more let it be said the Revolution may have hastened the final catastrophe, but certainly it was inevitable.

<sup>1</sup> "PARIS, 20th March 1792. We delegates of the Colonial Assembly of the French part of San Domingo hereby certify that the Settlement of Fossé, with its sugar-refinery, situated at Limonade, depending on the north of San Domingo and belonging to M. de Narbonne, was entirely destroyed at the beginning of the Revolt of the niggers." Here follow the signatures. (*Arch. Nat.*, T. 1089).

## CHAPTER VII

MADAME ADÉLAÏDE AND THE DEBTS OF LOUIS DE NARBONNE

**T**HUS, after having exhausted his mother's means, Count Louis de Narbonne had brought his wife's relations into the same straits. His marriage, far from putting a check on his wild career, had rather hastened his ruin. Madame de Narbonne was racking her brains in order to find some new expedient when, by chance, circumstances occurred from which a remedy might be drawn. In the autumn of 1784, it so happened that the French embassies in Russia and Turkey both became vacant at the same time. One of Narbonne's dearest friends, Count de Choiseul-Gouffier, who had just returned from a long journey in the East, and was publishing a sumptuous and picturesque account of his travels, was appointed, as it would seem, by public approbation, to the post of Constantinople. It was natural that his appointment should excite his friend's emulation. What could be more tempting to a shrewd, enterprising and ambitious young man than to go to St Petersburg and study, on the spot, the curious and enigmatical personality of Catherine II. who, with the King of Prussia, was the object of the infatuation of the French youth of the day, and to treat with this great sovereign the delicate affairs of Poland, Turkey, and Austria, thus gaining access, more swiftly and surely than by the slow and encumbered military career, to the highest posts in the State. On the other hand, from his mother's point of view, St Petersburg being one of the most distant posts, it was easy to break off harmful connections, to be

forgotten by them and, having put off the old man, return one day to France, refreshed, matured, if not perfect. Besides, it was one of the most lucrative posts, and if he could manage to stay there a few years, they would have time to put his money-matters in order and revive their dilapidated fortune. Madame Adélaïde therefore approved most eagerly the plans of her gentleman-in-waiting. Considering the influence which she still believed she had on the decisions of her nephew, the King, and the motives which were in favour of her candidate, it seemed likely that he would be appointed to the post, when suddenly a formidable rival sprang up in the person of Count Louis de Ségur. He was the eldest son of the Marshal, then Minister of War, and there was a difference of eighteen months between his age and that of Louis de Narbonne. They had both chosen the same career, their tastes and abilities were the same, and in Paris they moved in the same motley set of learned men and men of pleasure. At Strasburg he had assisted at the lectures given by the Reverend Koch on public law and, finally, part of his fortune was also involved in the sugar refinery of San Domingo. But Ségur had taken part in the American campaign, whereas de Narbonne had remained at home, deeming that there was already enough of the republican spirit in France. Frivolous and light-minded though he was, he had not in this respect, at least, as bad a reputation as his competitor. Finally, if the latter counted on Madame Adélaïde, Ségur, son of a colleague whom Vergennes had reasons to wish to oblige, had besides the help of the Queen. He was appointed. When she heard of her son's defeat, Madame de Narbonne might well cast a melancholy glance on the mistress to whom she had devoted her life and feel assured that henceforward the credit of the old Princess would have less weight at Court.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Mémoires, Souvenirs et Anecdotes du Comte L. de Ségur*, 5th edition, vol. i. pp. 373 and 375. Later on, during the Consulate, Ségur and

In the meantime the debts of Count Louis were accumulating. They were as innumerable as the stars, and as various in importance. But in one respect they differed from the extinct stars, for they seemed to rise out of their own ashes—thus, to quote but a few instances, on the 18th of February, 1791, his notary reimbursed to François Sommesson, one of Madame Adélaïde's valets de chambre, four promissory notes signed by de Narbonne, the total amount of which was 15,000 livres; ten days later the Count and his mother acknowledged severally and jointly that they owed the same valet a sum of 40,000 livres which "he had previously lent to them for their affairs."<sup>1</sup> The same thing occurs when settling with a certain Marchand who supplied them with wine. Count Louis reimburses 19,969 livres due on promissory notes, and at the same time borrows another 18,000 livres.<sup>2</sup> This accounts for what the Duchess de Reggio wrote long afterwards concerning this notorious spendthrift: "The Emperor gave him the most perfect welcome and began by paying a few

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Narbonne met again in the Salon of the Princess de Vaudemont whose habitual guests they were. For some time they had been rivals for the good graces of a celebrated actress, Mademoiselle Contat. Outwardly they appeared to be good friends, nevertheless Ségur never lost an opportunity of bringing his friend's failings into notice. (G. Stenges, *La Société Française pendant le Consulat*, 3<sup>e</sup> série, p. 454).

<sup>1</sup> *Arch. Nat.*, V. 568 and 1653. Sommesson, valet de chambre and upholsterer to Madame Adélaïde was detached from Bellevue in 1788, and entered the service of Madame de Narbonne as doorkeeper of the Tingry mansion which the Duchess had just hired at Versailles. He was arrested during the Terror and incarcerated in the Luxembourg Palace from where he was again brought to Versailles to assist at the inventory of the goods and chattels contained in the mansion. Having been led back to prison, he was dragged to the scaffold and executed as an accomplice "to the conspiracy of the Tyrant and his family" on the very day of the fall of Robespierre. On the 1st June 1829, in conformity to the law of 25th April 1825, his two sons claimed from the State a sum of about 30,000 francs which the Duchess de Narbonne still owed to their father (*Arch. Nat. ibid.* and W. 433, No. 973); *Archives of Seine et Oise*, s. 9 (Narbonne documents).

<sup>2</sup> *Arch. Nat.*, T. 568 and 1653.

debts that had been disclosed to him. A little later on the Emperor discovered a few more and said to M. de Narbonne, "But my dear Count, have you always had debts?" "Yes, Sire, I had nothing else!" and the Emperor paid them also.<sup>1</sup>

As Madame de Narbonne could not foresee the Emperor, she had to bethink herself of other devices. Then, and I believe it was only at this moment, Madame Adélaïde intervened. In spite of the graciousness with which she listened to the petitions of her lady-in-waiting, we may have noticed that the Duchess had generally asked for favours either for strangers or collateral relations; on the other hand, although the Princess had obtained for her an annuity drawn on the States of Languedoc, nothing proves that she had asked for this help, and, if she had done so, it was merely begging for a word of recommendation. It is true, when Madame de Narbonne acquired the magnificent estate of La Bove, the Princess paid two-thirds with her own money, but that was a present which the lady-in-waiting could accept as a token of esteem and gratitude for her long services; besides, the present was so strictly personal that in the deed of sale the estate was called "paraphernal." We do not intend to deny that many times Madame Adélaïde used her credit and made applications to the King or to some minister in order to facilitate the career of Louis de Narbonne. Is there anything that should astonish us in this fact? Was he not the son of one who was very dear to her and who shared her life? Was he not her own godchild, the boy who had grown up before her eyes, and who was almost a son to her? But—and this is a fact I wish to establish—up to the beginning of the year 1784, that is within a few months of the failure of his candidatureship for the post of ambassador to Russia, I do not believe that she had been once requested to pay a farthing for his debts. Let us examine

<sup>1</sup> *Le Maréchal Oudinot d'après les souvenirs de la Maréchale*, p. 152.



the documents contained in the *Archives Nationales*, or in the *Archives of Seine-et-Oise* that contain the papers of the Princess, let us search those belonging to Madame de Narbonne, we will find there, year by year, the accounts of the household of Madame Adélaïde, the pensions and gratuities drawn on her privy purse, but neither here nor there, up till 1784, do we find trace of the Princess having contracted any obligation in order to meet the liabilities of her godson. Therefore it was only in the last extremity when she had lost all hope of saving her son that Madame de Narbonne consented to be helped by the Princess. Another point is no less worthy of interest. When Madame Adélaïde wished to enable her lady-in-waiting to buy the estate of La Bove, she made her a gift of 500,000 francs. But when she endeavoured to pay off Louis de Narbonne's debts, she took good care not to give anything, either to the mother or to the son. She contented herself with lending, not money, but her name as a security, and not to the son but to the mother, in order to help her to get a loan; and even then she took every legal precaution so that the sum should be reimbursed. This brings to nought all the insinuations of Madame de Boigne who has left us a biting account of the terms on which the Duchess was with the Princess; this description, however, is even more inexact than malevolent. After having told us how the Royal family spent the evenings under Louis XVI., Madame de Boigne draws a parallel between the two rivals, and assures us that thanks to "Madame de Civrac (formerly Marquise de Durfort) Madame Victoire's drawing-room was very suitably attended by Court people—Madame de Narbonne, she continues, could only add a few guests to the attendance around the Princess: her arrogant temper would not permit her to have any other connections.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Madame Campan attached to the service of Mesdames, says exactly the reverse (*Mémoires*, vol. i. p. 22).

The libellers of the day have said that Count Louis de Narbonne was the son of Madame Adélaïde; that is false and absurd, but it is true that the Princess made enormous sacrifices on account of his failings, thus, Madame de Narbonne, who was so imperious, submitted to every caprice of Count Louis. When he had committed some folly and was in want of money, her temper became unbearable and she turned it principally against Madame Adélaïde. She made her home intolerable. After a few days the poor Princess would buy with gold, the peace of her life. This accounts for M. de Narbonne having in his possession enormous sums which he acquired without giving himself the least trouble and which he spent in the same way. Yet he was the most agreeable of men and certainly the least malicious. His worthlessness was instinctive, the result of being so much spoilt. Madame Adélaïde felt the weight of this yoke and bemoaned it when she dared. "One evening as my mother<sup>1</sup> was escorting her back to her apartments, Madame de Narbonne, having been more unpleasant than usual, she (the Princess) decided that she would not visit her again on the morrow. Taking delight in this idea she made up a whole story about what Madame de Narbonne would say, how she would act, and what temper she would show, etc.—'You do not reply, Madame D'Osmond—You are mistaken, I am weak, I am a Bourbon—I require to be led, but I am never treacherous!' Countess D'Osmond returned, 'I do not even suspect Madame of being indiscreet; but yet I know that to-morrow she will be a little more gracious towards Madame de Narbonne to make amends to her for having been thus slightly unfaithful in thought.' 'Alas, I fear indeed you are right!' And sure enough, on the following day the Princess called forth an explanation, and this was the occasion for a fresh

<sup>1</sup> Countess D'Osmond, mother of Madame de Boigne, was lady-in-waiting to Madame Adélaïde.

demand for money. It was granted. In the evening Madame de Narbonne was charming. Wishing to hide her weakness, the good Princess said to my mother as she was retiring, that Madame de Narbonne had apologised for having been so disagreeable on the evening before. She did not add how she had appeased her, but that was everybody's secret. Count de Narbonne was the first to laugh at this state of affairs and that made his position easier, for in those days every failing, vice or villainy, was sure to meet with indulgence if it were only admitted and confessed with grace. For nearly a whole year Madame Adélaïde had been in the habit of inviting my mother and father after having left Madame de Narbonne's salon, but someone having informed the lady-in-waiting, the Princess frankly owned that she no longer dared to do so."<sup>1</sup>

After having been dressed out by the Count de Mercy Argenteau as we have seen, something would have been wanting to the fortunes of Madame de Narbonne had she escaped the claws of Madame de Boigne. But whereas, in the beginning of this account, when she was still unknown to us, we thought it necessary to make some effort in order to redeem her from the hands of the German Ambassador, it is perhaps less necessary now to help her to escape from her too witty enemy. Without denying the literary satisfaction that is contained in this sour page, we will recall in a few words the reasons we have for not giving it more consideration. Madame de Boigne, who was born in 1871, was much too young at the time she speaks of to have known anything about the money troubles of Madame de Narbonne. In Madame Adélaïde's household, whether at Bellevue or later on during the emigration, at Rome, the little D'Osmond was nothing but the daughter of one of the Princess's ladies. In this instance, therefore, she can only have repeated

<sup>1</sup> *Mémoires of Madame de Boigne*, vol. i. pp. 57-60.

what she heard from her mother.<sup>1</sup> Had the latter received some rebuke from the Duchess on whom she was dependent? Her daughter seems to insinuate this, and, as we know, between women, such wounds are often incurable. On the other hand, the D'Osmond and the Chastellux were closely united, one of the daughters of the Duchess de Civrac after having married the Count de Chastellux, had succeeded the mother as lady-in-waiting to Madame Victoire. Her husband had been appointed gentleman-in-waiting to this Princess whilst the Count de Narbonne was named to the same post in Madame Adélaïde's household. If we add to their parents' jealousy that of the young people, we shall have discovered a second cause of Madame de Boigne's animosity.<sup>2</sup> There is yet another one. Her father had been a great friend of Louis de Narbonne, but placed himself under a different standard at the beginning of the Revolution. She asserts that Count Louis then said, "I am D'Osmond's shameful passion; he struggles against it in vain and I shall never get accustomed to seeing him in the *Parti des Bêtes*."<sup>3</sup> Hence the criticisms and recriminations that remained in her mind.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "I will pass rapidly over our stay in Italy. I have but the faintest remembrances of that time. I did not see Madame Adélaïde three times during the stay in Rome." *Mémoires of Madame de Boigne*, vol. i. p. 105.

<sup>2</sup> "The Chastellux children were most intimate with me (in Rome)." *Id. ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Mémoires of Madame de Boigne*, vol. i. p. 91.

<sup>4</sup> Madame Adélaïde had an account with the banker d'Arlincourt, a former farmer-general. Before supplying her with funds, d'Arlincourt, being a good banker, had wished to know what was the pecuniary position of the Princess. She had assured him that she owed no one anything. Strictly speaking it was true, nevertheless, she had lent her name to enable Madame de Narbonne to obtain a loan and she had given her security in view of others. The Count d'Osmond, who had not yet emigrated, wrote (before 24th August 1791) to his wife who was in Rome that "he had seen far over 100,000 livres of promissory notes signed by Madame." This rumour spread abroad in Mesdames' circle,

We can well believe that the bitter line appeared around the lips of Madame de Narbonne as we see it in a beautiful portrait of her in her middle age. It is a line full of weariness, and lends a touching charm to the picture, when one has penetrated its secret.<sup>1</sup> We do not wonder that she became irritable, morose or even ill-tempered towards her inferiors. How agreeable it must have been to her to have a son that caused her such anxiety and inflicted on her the cruel mortification of begging for him from a Princess to whom she owed so much already. We do not believe that she could behave towards Madame Adélaïde in the way described by Madame de Boigne. Not only her character, as we have now described it, refutes such a charge, but also the innumerable efforts which she made before appealing to her mistress, make it unlikely. The d'Armaillé marriage, the Montholon match, the embassy in St Petersburg, the precautions taken by Madame Adélaïde and her notary in order to secure the restitution of the loan—all these facts render incredible the supposed indelicacy of the one and the imprudence of the other. In her recollections of the family, Madame de Boigne found some traits relating to Madame de Narbonne, and which for reasons that can be easily guessed, had been distorted. But her description is so minute that one feels that she has added to it. It is like an old pastel; under pretence of restoring it, she has turned it into an aqua-fortis, and rendered it unrecognisable.

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might reach d'Arlincourt's ears and make him believe that Madame Adélaïde had deceived him. The Duchess de Narbonne therefore hastened to write to Alliot de Mussey, treasurer of the Princess, requesting him, in the latter's name to go to the banker and assure him that "nothing was more false" (*Arch. Nat.*, L. 381. "Sequestered documents of d'Alliot de Mussey.") This might very possibly have been the origin of Madame de Boigne's account.

<sup>1</sup> *Mémoires of Count de Rambuteau*, p. 202.

## CHAPTER VIII

### RUIN OF THE DUCHESSE DE NARBONNE

**B**ESIDES all the moral reasons that we have for doubting the assertions made by Madame de Boigne, there are facts, accounts and figures, the accuracy of which cannot be questioned. These figures will not only show us the exact nature of the financial help given by Madame Adélaïde, but they will also, at the same time, enable us to ascertain what was the real state of Madame de Narbonne's fortune when she drew up her accounts on the eve of the Revolution. This crude expression is but too appropriate, for if we consider the assets and liabilities of the Duchess, it becomes evident that she was hurrying on to the most disastrous and unavoidable bankruptcy.<sup>1</sup>

On the 11th February 1784, Madame Adélaïde acknowledged before notaries, having received from a certain Jean Raoulx, merchant, living at Versailles, Rue Satory, the sum of 176,415 livres, 16 sous, 6 deniers "to be used for her own private purposes," as the said lady declared. Nevertheless, on the very same day and in the presence of the same notaries, Madame Adélaïde and her lady-in-waiting, confessed that "although the loan appeared to have been contracted by the Princess, it had, in reality, been made over entirely to the said lady, Duchess de

<sup>1</sup> Unless some other source be mentioned, the following details have been taken from the valuable correspondence of Madame de Narbonne with Alliot de Mussey, treasurer to Mesdames, shortly before and after their emigration. The other letters were written to Lalleman, secretary and legal representative to the Duchess. They were all written between the 10th May 1791, and 7th August 1792 (*Arch. Nat.*, T. 381 and 568).

Narbonne, to whom the Princess had condescended to lend her name, in order to give her pleasure and to enable her to obtain this loan." It is the first time that we see Madame Adélaïde intervening in the money matters of Madame de Narbonne. But it is evident that no one would borrow 176,415 livres, and especially not 16 *sous* and 6 *deniers*, unless it were to pay off a debt that was due immediately; for instance, the bill of some pressing and imperious tradesman. We are not trespassing very far on the field of conjecture when we say that, in this case, the debtor was Louis de Narbonne, whom some creditor had seized by the throat and did not mean to let go until he should receive full payment. As he had no money, the Count sent to his mother and she, being in the same penury, hastened to Madame Adélaïde.<sup>1</sup> At the time Mesdames de France enjoyed an annual income of 1,400,000, livres without counting the revenue of the estate of Louvois.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, the Princess had only to say one word to her treasurer. Why did she not do so? Perhaps out of delicacy, because she did not care to disclose the distress of her lady-in-waiting to one of the servants of her household. It may be also that this servant, who lost his place shortly afterwards on account of mismanagement,<sup>3</sup> was unable to produce the sum at so short a notice. Finally, we may suppose,—and I myself am inclined to the latter conjecture—that Madame Adélaïde refrained from lending anything herself, because

<sup>1</sup> Later on, when his mother and Madame Adélaïde had emigrated, Madame de Staël, who was then his mistress, used to come to his assistance in such cases as this. It is said that, one day, not being able to procure a sum of thirty thousand livres for which he was being sued, Madame de Staël went in despair to her husband and asked him for the amount. The great Swedish nobleman is said to have replied: "Oh! how great is the pleasure you are giving me; I thought he was your lover!" . . . Who ever dared to say that Baron de Staël-Holstein was not witty?

<sup>2</sup> Account enclosed in a letter to Lalleman, 23rd August 1791.

<sup>3</sup> *Arch. Nat.*, 0137651.

if her godchild had once known that he could depend upon her, he would have sung the same tune to her, far too often. The sum lent by Raoulx, interest included, was to be reimbursed by instalments by the 1st July 1789. Nevertheless, on the 19th January 1791, Madame de Narbonne still owed 77,597 livres, 14 sous, 6 deniers, to the Versailles merchant. She had, therefore, paid off about 100,000 livres, but had been unable to refund more. In spite of the difficult times, Raoulx then succeeded in getting a certain Henri Mecquenem d'Artaize to endorse part of the sum owed to him, that is 30,000 francs. Madame de Narbonne had already contracted a loan from M. d'Artaize, for on the 11th July of the preceding year, she had borrowed, with Madame Adélaïde's security, a sum of 79,200 livres.<sup>1</sup> Madame de Narbonne emigrated without having been able to make the slightest reimbursement to d'Artaize. However, she managed, by small instalments, with great difficulty, to pay off with paper money, the debt which Raoulx had made over to d'Artaize. The last payment was made on the 27th March 1792. As for the 79,200 livres which she had borrowed from him personally, I am very much afraid that he never recovered any part of it, save one instalment of 28,200 livres, paid on 20th July of the same year.

All that is known about the merchant Raoulx is that, for twenty years, he had looked after the business matters of Mesdames of France and that he followed them when they emigrated to Rome in 1791, acting then in their house, as spy for Hugon de Bassville, agent of the French Republic.<sup>2</sup> As for d'Artaize, perhaps we may identify him with the former groom of the bed-chamber to the Dauphin, brother of Madame Adélaïde, whom the

<sup>1</sup> *Archives of Seine-et-Oise*. Series 9. (Narbonne documents.)

<sup>2</sup> *Correspondence of the Directors of the Academy of France in Rome*, vol. xvi. p. 170-171. Leone Vicchi: *The French in Rome during the Convention*, pp. lxxvii. and cxxi.



historiographer Moreau calls *d'Arthes*,<sup>1</sup> whilst the editor of the *Journal de Papillon de la Ferté*, turns his name into *d'Artèze*.<sup>2</sup>

We have already seen one groom of the bedchamber Sommesson, come to the assistance of Madame de Narbonne—therefore *d'Artaize* would be the second to help her. At the same period, we find trace of another loan granted to Madame Adélaïde for Madame de Narbonne, by a certain Varanchan who had become farmer-general and was the brother of a former woman of the bedchamber of Mesdames. This way of acting is not peculiar to Madame de Narbonne alone. In those days, masters generally paid their servants badly, but the latter did not complain much, for they made up on the "candle" and "table-leavings-room."<sup>3</sup> But they very willingly upheld them when they solicited a post from one of the Ministers—especially in the finances. It was a convenient way of discharging the debt they owed them, and being well situated, these former servants proved their gratitude by untying their purse-strings to their needy masters.

However, Varanchan hesitated, and as Madame de Narbonne was in a hurry—it was the eve of her emigration—she applied to one of his colleagues—a certain de Condray who provided her with 200,000 livres on the 1st February 1791—Varanchan having thought better of the matter, altered his mind and lent another 200,000 livres jointly with de Coudray, on condition that the sum should not be reimbursed before ten years—these

<sup>1</sup> *Mes Souvenirs (My recollections)*, vol. i. p. 149.

<sup>2</sup> Introduction, p. 49.

<sup>3</sup> In January 1792, Madame Adélaïde owed two years salary to Madame Mercier, her first Woman of the Bedchamber. As we know, at Court, the candles were only used once, and were immediately replaced. The servants sold the wax at their own profit. The "serdeau" was the leavings from the masters' table. When the servants' hall had been supplied, the remains were sold to the hucksters whose stalls lined on both sides, the Place d'Armes at Versailles.

two loans were negotiated by Alliot de Mussey, treasurer to Mesdames. They were inscribed to Madame Adélaïde, but the transaction was partially concealed from Abbé de Ruallem, Comptroller of the Finances of the Princesses, who was only informed of half of the Varanchan loan. As a security, Madame Adélaïde offered the estate of Louvois which was her own.<sup>1</sup> In spite of her fears for the future, we may presume that although she was about to emigrate, Madame de Narbonne did not mean to cut off all supplies behind her. She hoped, like everybody else, to return to France as soon as the storm would be over. Therefore, the 400,000 francs which she borrowed were not intended to supply her personal wants during the short stay which she meant to make abroad. On 7th February, when ready to start, she writes to Alliot de Mussey, "I have just drawn up all my accounts. I shall need at once or, at least, as soon as possible, 45,000 livres which you will kindly entrust to Lalleman" (her secretary). Therefore, she believed that she could manage with one tenth of this amount. Besides, being attached to the service of Madame Adélaïde, her wants and those of the Princess, were to be provided for by the Civil List. This long-dated loan was, therefore, contracted in order to extinguish some urgent debts—debts that cannot be left unpaid when one is going away for any length of time. And, as a matter of fact, we learn from the correspondence of the Duchess with the Treasurer of Mesdames, that the 200,000 livres supplied by Varanchan, served to annul a previous debenture amounting to 257,000 livres. We see also that on leaving France, Madame de Narbonne left 50,000 livres in the hands of Alliot de Mussey.

<sup>1</sup> Varanchan wanted Madame Victoire to pledge herself severally and jointly with Madame Adélaïde, but not being at all eager to mix this Princess up in her private affairs, Madame de Narbonne objected most energetically. He also wanted to exact Bellevue as a security besides Louvois, but Madame de Narbonne made him remark that "Bellevue was not an estate and could not add anything to the guarantee."

Her liabilities towards the "Firm Pinet" were no less heavy.<sup>1</sup> The first two promissory notes inscribed to Madame Adélaïde for her, by this financial company, amounted altogether to 87,000 livres, due on 5th May 1790. They were discharged by the Duchess on the 7th December, together with the interest running since the date on which the sum was due. Two other notes fell on the 5th May 1791, amounting to a total of 83,400 francs. It took some time for Madame de Narbonne to discharge this debt; on the 11th June 1791, she paid 48,000 francs; on the 16th July, 16,000 francs; on the 17th March 1792, 8,000 francs, and finally, on the 22nd, the balance of 12,000 francs. On the 16th June 1792, she succeeded in redeeming two notes due on 5th May preceding, and which, together with the interest, amounted to 80,098 francs. Let us recapitulate. From 7th December 1790 to the 16th June 1792, the Duchess reimbursed 251,098 livres which Madame Adélaïde had borrowed for her from the firm Pinet.

Finally, if we mention, as we should, a sum of 203,097 livres, lent to Madame de Narbonne, by Alliot de Mussey, on the 26th February 1787, and refunded as soon as 17th August 1789. I do not say that we shall have exhausted the list of the loans contracted by the mother of Count Louis, but that we shall have, at least, as exact an idea as possible of the efforts she made and of the assistance she received from Madame Adélaïde.

What conclusion are we to draw from these figures? They are of the greatest interest with regard to the Princess and her lady-in-waiting. Instead of meeting with a weak old maid imposed on by a wily adventuress—as Madame

<sup>1</sup> Pinet was a banker who speculated very much, especially on corn, tallow, and navy supplies. He was wont to say boastfully: "The whole court would have to fail for me to be without money." He died in 1789, leaving a deficit of about forty millions. It is not known whether he committed suicide or was murdered (*Arch. Nat.*, T. 957. Papers of Predicant, notary).

de Boigne would have us believe,—these figures show us that, if Madame Adélaïde was a devoted friend, she was at the same time a prudent one; she was willing to oblige and yet she was most cautious; and although her generosity was boundless in its intentions, in the execution of it she showed herself most enlightened. These figures speak eloquently of the ardent mother's heart that beat in Madame de Narbonne's breast. In order to save the honour of her son, she pledged her own many times and with great rashness, borrowing far more than she could answer for, hoping against hope that some miracle would take place and reform her son. Alas! Instead of the longed-for wonder, the Revolution and exile prevented her from fulfilling not only her own liabilities, but also those which Madame Adélaïde had contracted for her. We have, however, been able to ascertain with what courage and perseverance she endeavoured to do so. With the assent of her daughter-in-law, she devoted to this task all the funds of the San Domingo estate which the Count did not divert to his own use. To these she added the arrears of her income, her different pensions and her salary. But, even had salary, pensions and income been paid to her regularly, they would never have sufficed to cover the enormous debt. As lady-in-waiting to a Princess, as Duchess, and presently as a Spanish Grandee, she was obliged to keep up her position, and not only her estates in Auvergne did not yield,<sup>1</sup> but she had to wait years before receiving the first penny of her salary.<sup>2</sup> Then, bit by bit, she threw

<sup>1</sup> The estate of Sansac had been let on the 30th November 1751, at an annual rent of 1700 livres. On the 10th June 1763, the farmer acknowledged that he owed 6000 livres on the lease of this property (*Arch. Nat.*, T. 1653).

<sup>2</sup> It was not until 1777 that the Duchess de Beauvilliers, to whom Madame de Narbonne succeeded as lady-in-waiting, received the quarter's-pay of her salary for 1775. When she started for the emigration the Royal Exchequer owed Madame de Narbonne 34,357 livres for the years 1788 and 1789. These arrears besides other annuities, on the

to the Minotaur everything she could scrape together, here and there, not only money, but even the property that came to her from her parents. Thus, on the 11th January 1786, she was empowered by her cousin, Madame de Beaumont, to alienate an estate and a wood which the latter owned in Gascony. On the 29th November 1787, she sold for 22,000 livres, ready money, the house at Riom, which had belonged to her mother and her aunts, and where the former had retired to die on the 13th April 1783.<sup>1</sup> On the 6th September 1788, she sold for 80,000 francs, to be paid in five annuities, the estate of Sansac, thus breaking up the estate of Chalus, where she was born and which had been in her family from time immemorial, and to which she owed one of her names.<sup>2</sup> She sold a mortgage of 1500 livres which she had on the estate of Besance, near Romagne in Auvergne.<sup>3</sup> She sold a life annuity of 15,160 livres on the City of Paris, then another annuity of 11,300 livres which, as we have seen, had been granted to her on the so-called Dutch loan of 1772,<sup>4</sup> and, finally, she gave up a bond of 30,000 livres owed to her by a certain Le Normand de Flaghac.<sup>5</sup> What did

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City of Paris, rights for carpets and grand liveries amounted to 122,911 livres, 7 sous in May 1792 (*Arch. Nat.*, 03765 and T. 568).

<sup>1</sup> *Arch. Nat.*, T. 568.

<sup>2</sup> The purchaser, Jean Feuillant, senior, was a merchant of Brassac (Puy-du-Dôme). The Duchess had already lent him 6000 livres, of which he had only reimbursed 2400 livres. Later on, she had promised to obtain for him the help of Madame Adelaïde for a loan of 100,000 francs, which he had solicited from the Government in order to enable him to work some mines of which he had obtained the concession. In return, he had undertaken to obtain payment of various sums owed to Madame de Narbonne by other debtors. However, on the 8th June 1792, her agent upbraids Feuillant severely for not having fulfilled his engagements.

<sup>3</sup> *Arch. Nat.*, T. 1653.

<sup>4</sup> *Arch. Nat.*, T. 568.

<sup>5</sup> This is, no doubt, François-Nicolas Le Normand, who was tax-gatherer at Riom, and became Le Normand de Flaghac in 1765. By his

she not sell in order to redeem her benefactress's signature!! She thus succeeded in extinguishing a great number of her son's debts, it is true; but whilst trying to save him, she brought ruin on herself.

As it often happens in such cases, she thought it necessary for her son's future career to go on living on the same grand footing as before. The estate of La Bove, which had already swallowed up the fortune of a farmer-general, was eating up her money, not only because she kept it in repair, but also because of the various improvements she had undertaken there. Having such a country-house it seemed no less indispensable to have an equally fine mansion in town. In November 1788 she hired at Versailles a house which had been left vacant by the death of the Prince de Tingry, Captain of the Guards. It was a vast estate, situated at the corner of the *rue Neuve-Notre-Dame* and the *Boulevard de la Reine*. An interminable inventory, made four years later, will reveal to us the number, the beauty and the richness of the furniture and works of art with which she adorned this dwelling.<sup>1</sup>

Remembering that her husband was a descendant of a certain Manrique de Lara, and that they had themselves been in the service of an Infante at Parma, Madame de Narbonne had for several years coveted the rank of a Spanish Grandee. As early as 1783, King Charles III. had consented to confer on her this high dignity, but the letters-patent had not been sent to her, very probably, because she had recoiled before the heavy dues to be paid. It was not until the end of 1789 that she decided to send to the French Ambassador at Madrid the 24,000 livres that were exacted. If we recollect that on the night of the

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second marriage, he became the husband of Marie Louise Morphy, former mistress of Louis XV. He was major-domo to the Count d'Artois, and, finally, treasurer of the Order of the Holy Ghost.

<sup>1</sup> It was let at a rental of 2200 livres per annum, with a three years' lease, renewable every three years (*Arch. Nat.*, T. 568).

4th August of the same year, the National Assembly had decreed the abolition of all the titles and privileges of the nobles, this step, on the part of the *ci-devant* Duchess, can only be interpreted as an act of haughty protest.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, if we consider in a general way the position of Madame de Narbonne on the eve of the day when, with the Revolution, a new destiny begins for her, we see that she is lady-in-waiting to a Princess, Duchess, and Spanish Grandee of the First Class ; she lives in one of the princely mansions that encircle, like a crown, the Palace of Versailles, and she owns one of the most beautiful estates in the provinces.

To passers-by the front of the mansion was both brilliant and imposing ; but behind, as we now know, the building was shattered and fast crumbling away.

<sup>1</sup> *Arch. Nat.*, T. 568.

## CHAPTER IX

### EMIGRATION OF MESDAMES

**M**ESDAMES were at Versailles in their apartment situated on the groundfloor of the north wing, when the riot of the 5th October 1789 suddenly took them by surprise. An army formed of Parisian women invaded the town, breaking in doors, pulling down the sign-boards from the merchants' houses, and uttering cries of death against the Queen and the Life-guardsmen.

As the alarm-beat sounded through the streets, calling the troops to arms, the shops were closed precipitately and battalions and squadrons drew up in a body around the Palace beneath the pelting rain and the darkness of night creeping on. Most of the persons belonging to Mesdames' household had assembled in their drawing-room. "We will teach them how to die!" said Madame Adélaïde, who had remained very calm in the midst of the uproar. The shutters had been closed so that nothing could be seen of what was going on without, but they could hear the shouts of the crowd, that filled the Place d'Armes, pressing against the iron gates in order to force their way into the courtyards. "Count Louis de Narbonne, a friend of Lafayette's, arrived towards midnight, and, laughing at our fears, assured us that all was quiet. He was still speaking when M. de Thianges and Madame de Béon threw open the door, crying out: 'Monsieur de Lafayette is with the King!' It is impossible to describe the astonishment that filled everyone on hearing this news. Mesdames' drawing-room became empty almost



immediately and the Princesses went up to Louis XVI. by their own private staircase."<sup>1</sup>

On the following day, they took part in that memorable procession that brought back to Paris as a prisoner the discrowned monarch. They seated themselves in their coach with Madame de Narbonne and Madame de Chastellux, and followed the royal coach at some distance, being eventually separated from it by the dense crowd. They thus succeeded in extricating themselves from the press, and proceeded to Bellevue, with an escort of one hundred National Guards, who installed themselves in the Castle.<sup>2</sup> An apartment was prepared for them in the Tuileries, either in the Riding School Pavilion or that of Marsan, and, when it was ready to receive them, they came and took possession of it, together with their household. Already, on the 30th November, we find Madame de Narbonne hiring stabling for six horses, two rooms for the coachman, two coach-houses and a loft in a street near the Tuileries.<sup>3</sup> But, as the lease was only made for one year, we may conclude that Mesdames considered their establishment in Paris as merely temporary, or else that they were already thinking of going abroad.

Madame Adélaïde's lady-in-waiting was inclined to the latter opinion. Whatever might be the optimist views of her son, ever since the October days, Madame de Narbonne had remained under an impression of anxiety and disgust that prevented her from having any confidence in the good behaviour of the Parisians. She is said to have urged Mesdames to leave France.<sup>4</sup> To tell the truth,

<sup>1</sup> *Memoirs of Madame de la Rochejacquelein*, quoted by Ed. de Barthélemy in *Mesdames de France*, p. 397. Madame de la Rochejacquelein, née de Donissan, was the niece of the Countess de Chastellux, lady-in-waiting to Madame Victoire.

<sup>2</sup> *Mesdames de France*, by Ed. de Barthélemy, p. 397.

<sup>3</sup> *Arch. Nat.*, T. 568.

<sup>4</sup> *Correspondance secrète* (Secret Correspondence), published by M. de Lescure, vol. ii. p. 507.

there was no need for her to make any very great effort in order to bring them to this decision, for, ever since the Civil Constitution of the clergy had been established, the Princesses had feared a religious persecution and wished to retire to some place where they might practise their faith in all peace of conscience. In order to enjoy more freedom than at the Tuileries, where they had merely pitched their tent, they returned to Bellevue, their usual residence. They spent the whole of January 1791 in getting ready. Although Madame de Narbonne states, on the 23rd inst., that their preparations are almost complete, it would seem that the Princesses had put off to this moment the settling of several essential questions. Thus, they did not know yet whether the King would consent to their departure, nor even where they would go, or who would provide for them during their stay in foreign parts. That such important questions should have been thus delayed proves sufficiently in what a state of excitement their preparations were made. During the last days of this month, Madame Adélaïde began corresponding with the King on this subject. Unfortunately we have only her letters and not those of Louis XVI. Such as they are, however, they supply, to a certain extent, the missing ones. Together with other letters which the Princess wrote to the King during her journey, they contain valuable matter which we cannot recommend too earnestly to all historians of the Revolution. Indeed, they throw great light, not only on the preliminaries of the famous journey of Mesdames which aroused such passions amongst the Revolutionists, but also on that grave incident of their arrest at Arnay-le-Duc, precursory event which might well have enlightened the King as to the fate that awaited him on the day when he would, in his turn, attempt to flee. No doubt his common sense made him understand the importance of this symptomatic event, for he carefully locked up his aunt's letters in the iron safe; but his weak-

ness, his irresolution, and other causes, independent of his will, prevented him from drawing any profit from this lesson, when, four months later, he was on the road to Varennes. On the other hand, these letters make us become more intimately acquainted with Madame Adélaïde. They reveal to us a *cléver* and high-minded woman, who was well able to take a decision and whose heart was full of tender feeling. These documents will enable us to verify the opinion which certain chroniclers have seen fit to give on this Princess, somewhat hastily perhaps, somewhat prematurely, and without even really knowing her.

Thus, on the 22nd January 1891, Madame Adélaïde wrote to the King :—

“How can I express to you, my dear nephew, the various sentiments that fill my soul? Your letter quite overcame me. Your friendship is all my happiness and increases, if possible, my grief at leaving you.

“Before receiving your letter, I had already given up my plan concerning Brussels, as I had foreseen all the drawbacks you mention to me. The choice remains between Spain and Rome. If you think that we can serve you in Spain, I shall not hesitate for one moment; but, if money is the only consideration, as Rome is much cheaper, I think there would be fewer drawbacks in that place, if I can find someone who is willing to provide funds and wait for happier days. Perhaps we might be able to help you from there with Spain. Therefore, if money is the only reason for your preference, I ask you to give me three days to make my choice, which will depend entirely on what is most useful and pleasing to you. I hope you are quite convinced of this.

“Adieu, my dear nephew. Forgive me if I am uneasy. My affection for you is the only cause of my anxiety. Do

not cease to bestow on me your friendship—it will be my support and happiness.”

From this letter it appears that Mesdames' first idea had been to go simply to Brussels, but as the Netherlands were overcrowded with refugees and compromising *émigrés*, they had given it up for Spain or Italy. It was also the wish of Louis XVI., and it seems certain that, far from raising any objection to the departure of his aunts, as it has been asserted, the King granted them his full consent. He had merely called their attention to one danger, namely, that the National Assembly, being irritated at their flight, might cut off their supplies. Finally, we have seen that Madame Adélaïde volunteered to serve the interests of the King of France at the Court of Spain, but, as we shall see, she had not many illusions on this point.

Three days later the Princess took up her pen once more and wrote :—

“MY DEAR NEPHEW,—I have found my man! He undertakes to make us draw in Rome the money that we shall need as long as payment shall not be stopped here, and, in that event, to make advances of 1,200,000 livres if our stay has to be prolonged, which, I hope, will not be the case. Therefore, with your approval, I prefer Italy to Spain for many reasons. In the first place, we would be obliged to negotiate with the Ambassador, and that would be very long. Secondly, I am not quite sure how I should be received there, for the Queen<sup>1</sup> has neglected me very much for the last eighteen months. She writes to me very rarely. During several months I sent her three letters, but I have received no answer—not even on New Year's Day. If she were to receive us, it would

<sup>1</sup> Doña Marie Louise Thérèse, daughter of Madame Infanta and, consequently, the niece of Mesdames de France. As we know, she had been brought up for a time by Madame de Narbonne at Parma.

be in state and we should be under our own name. We should be overwhelmed by French people who would persecute us in order to get into the service of Spain; I could not refuse their petitions and I should make myself very importunate. Our expenditure would be much heavier. If we were to be a charge to the King of Spain, it would make the country grumble and, besides, I own that I should feel humiliated more on your account than on mine. We would be looked upon with great displeasure.

"Thus, every consideration induces me to prefer Rome. Nevertheless, in spite of all these reasons, I shall submit myself, as is just, to whatever you may decide. But I confess that the time that would be spent in negotiating and the uncertainty as to how we should be received, make me apprehend this course. If you have no objection we will dine with you in Paris next Saturday (29th January). I intend to bring you the agreement drawn up by the person who consents to lend us funds, so that you may sanction it by your own signature. I will not repeat to you, my dear nephew, how grieved I am. My tenderness towards you is the surest proof of what I feel.

"I beg of you to embrace the Queen for me. I am not writing to her because I do not wish to make myself importunate by saying the same things over and over again. You will show her my letter."

Neither in the other papers belonging to Madame Adélaïde, nor in those of Madame de Narbonne, can we find the name of the daring banker who undertook to provide Mesdames with money during their stay abroad. It may have been Raoulx, the Versailles merchant, who had done business with them during twenty years and who had previously lent such a large sum to Madame de Narbonne for her to pay her son's debts. We know

that he left for Rome at the same time as the daughters of Louis XY., and that, after the downfall of the Monarchy, he went and offered his services to Hugon de Bassville, unofficial agent of the French Republic, hoping, no doubt, to recover his advances by this treason. In any case this banker was not quite devoid of prudence, since he exacted no less a security than the King's. Agreeing with Madame Adélaïde, Louis XVI. preferred Italy to Spain, and, when, on the 29th January, the Princess went to dine in Paris, she had very little difficulty in persuading him to share her views, for, two days later, on the 1st February, Governor Morris—Minister to the United States—says that he has heard from Madame de Ségur, lady-in-waiting to Madame Victoire, that Mesdames are about to leave for Rome.<sup>1</sup> Having thus obtained the King's consent and settled the goal of their journey, the Princesses demanded a passport from the Paris Municipality. But the Municipality refused to comply with their request. Not only did they refuse to deliver the passport, but, following the injunctions of the Sections, they decided, on 4th February, that on the next day the Mayor should go at the head of a delegation and lay before the King "the fears entertained by the citizens concerning the journey of Mesdames and the troubles which it might cause." At present, it is hard for us to conceive the intense excitement felt throughout France, and more especially in Paris, by the exodus of the members of the Royal family and of the nobles in general. On the contrary, it would seem to us that, to be consistent with themselves, the destroyers of the Old Régime who were endeavouring with so much zeal to rebuild a new society, should not only have let them depart, but should have thrust them out as one clears away the rubbish that obstructs the ground on which one wishes to build. It would seem that things were

<sup>1</sup> *Journal*, p. 207. Pariset edition.

looked at very differently in those days. In the feelings of the people towards the refugees there was a vague and most mistaken fear that they would stir up the foreigners against France; but it was all a question of wounded pride, of that vanity that is the key-note to the French character and the mortification of which was an unacknowledged, but certainly important, factor of the Revolution. The reconstructors of the new building took as a personal offence the distrust with which they were regarded by that portion of the former occupants. And yet, if they had let Louis XVI. go through Varennes without hindrance, they would perhaps have caused him much embarrassment later on and would have spared themselves and France many misfortunes!

Being repelled by the Parisian Municipality, Mesdames fell back on the King who signed their passport on the 2nd February and had it countersigned by M. de Montmorin, Minister of Foreign Affairs.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The passport was thus worded :—

" In the King's Name !

" To all officials, civil and military, to whom is entrusted the care of watching over and maintaining order in the different provinces of the Kingdom and to all others to whom it appertains, greeting ! We hereby inform you and command you to let pass freely, without causing or tolerating that they be molested in any way, our very dear and much beloved Aunt Adélaïde and our dear and very much beloved Aunt Victoire, who are going to Rome, accompanied by the Lady Narbonne and Lady Chastellux together with their suite, their servants, their luggage and their carriages. The present passport is available for one month only. Given at Paris on the second day of February 1790.

(Signed) "Louis.

" By the King : Montmorin. Gratis."

" Later on, after Mesdames had been molested for the first time at Moret, some members of the National Assembly expressed their astonishment that Montmorin should have consented to countersign their passport. He then wrote to the President of the Assembly :—

" When by law it shall be forbidden to leave the kingdom without a passport, then a passport may be considered as an authorisation to quit the country. But such a law has never existed. Until then, a pass-

When he sent this document, Louis XVI. did not conceal from them the fears which he entertained since the refusal of the Municipality. Madame Adélaïde replied to him :—

*" 3rd February.*

" I cannot tell you, my dear nephew, how deeply I am touched by the anxiety which you show concerning our departure. I expected all this commotion and that they would seek to intimidate us. But our decision is taken. We desired that this journey should be made public, in order to allow the first moment of excitement to subside. I do not doubt but that in the same way they will attempt to raise up the provinces through which we must pass, but there also the commotion will subside. I recognise your friendship for us in all the precautions that you have taken. I do not doubt that they will be successful. If you think it necessary, I will delay for a few days, but I ask you to observe the greatest secrecy on this subject. Otherwise, we shall always have to begin again.

" You may be quite sure, my dear nephew, that it is with greatest regret that we are leaving you and have taken this decision. The important considerations that

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port must be regarded merely as an attestation of the quality of the persons. Consequently, it was impossible to refuse to comply with Mesdames' demand. It was necessary either to be opposed to the journey or to ward off the annoyances, amongst which it was impossible not to foresee their being arrested by a Municipality who could not identify them. There are certain ancient laws against emigrating, but they have fallen into disuse, and, by the principles of liberty decreed by the Assembly they have certainly been repealed. If the document is to be considered as a regular authorisation, by refusing it, we would not only have anticipated the law, but actually have made one. The fact of having given this passport, by which, without bestowing any further rights, troubles could be ward off, can only be regarded as an act of prudence" (23rd February).

I wished to give Montmorin's opinion word for word, because his arguments brought the matter back to the point, whereas the Municipal authorities were doing the reverse.



I have mentioned to you, that of my religion, could alone force me to take a course that is so cruel to my heart. I would have given way to all other reasons, and my affection for you would have prevailed once more, as I have already proved to you on several other occasions. But in this case, we must make sacrifices for our religion, and this is, assuredly, the greatest that I can offer up. I hope God will reward us for it one day. My soul is mortally sad, my dear nephew, and my heart is full of the deepest sorrow! If you would only read it and learn all that I feel and suffer! For no words can convey my tender affection. It is beyond anything that I can express."

This letter and all those that are contained in this correspondence, were not intended to be published, therefore we may believe Madame Adélaïde when she declares that she and her sister were leaving the country from religious motives. Although we just now heard her putting herself at the disposal of Louis XVI. in the event of her seeking a refuge in Spain, it seems more than likely that she started for Rome without any political mission. This letter again alludes to the precautions which the King had taken with regard to his aunts' journey. These precautions consisted in what we would now call an official communication to the press, whereby the public was put on its guard against the false rumours spread about concerning the departure of Mesdames,<sup>1</sup> and, furthermore, a circular issued on the 9th February, by the Minister of the Home Department, announcing this journey to the Governors of the Provinces through which the Princesses were to travel and requesting them to do all in their power to facilitate their passage.

When, on the 5th February, in compliance with the decision taken by the Municipality on the previous day,

<sup>1</sup> *Moniteur*, 3rd February 1791.

Bailly, Mayor of Paris, presented himself at the Tuileries, at the head of a deputation, the King replied to him : "Your demand is unconstitutional. The Declaration of the Rights of Man and the laws of the State allow any private individual to travel and to leave the Kingdom when it pleases him. Mesdames, my aunts, must enjoy the same privileges as the other citizens." As Bailly was about to make an objection, the King is said to have cut him short by saying : "When you will be able to show me a decree of the Assembly prohibiting journeys, I will forbid my aunts to leave; until then, they shall be free to quit the Kingdom the same as other citizens." This reply was made known at once and increased the ill-feeling of the people. The journalists, throwing oil upon the fire as is their wont, made the most of the King's words. "No, Sire," cried Camille Desmoulins. "Your aunts have no right to go and spend our millions on the Pope's land ! Let them give up their pension ! Let them restore to the Treasury all the gold they are carrying away with them ! Then, they may go where they will, to Loretto or to Compostello, a white wand in their hands and a cloak of shells on their shoulders."

Marat, less quizzical but still more violent, wrote in *L'Ami du Peuple*—"These devotees must be kept as hostages and a triple guard must be set around the rest of the family ! Mark well, Citizens ! The King's aunts would leave behind them three millions of debts and they would carry with them twelve millions in gold, which they have secured by paying twenty-nine livres on each louis.<sup>1</sup> Observe also, that they are to take the Dauphin with them, and that another child of the same age and appearance will take his place in the Tuileries where he

<sup>1</sup> In a letter which Alliot de Mussey wrote to Madame de Narbonne on the 21st June 1791, he says, "Silver is now at 15½ per cent. and a louis draws four livres, ten sous."

has been brought up for the last eighteen months in view of this rape which has long been premeditated.”<sup>1</sup> If these rumours alarmed those around the King, they made no impression on Madame Adélaïde. On the 6th February she wrote to Louis XVI. :—

“As you may well believe, my dear nephew, before appealing to you, I had considered everything and above all the grief that I should feel at leaving you. But this consideration could not make me hesitate to do my duty, and my affection for you had to be set aside. The dangers which some people seem to apprehend for me cannot detain me. My faith shows me what I ought to do ; I can only listen to her voice, and, with your permission, my decision is irrevocable. If the Municipal authorities come to me, I shall make the same reply to them, and I do not see by what right they can refuse me what is granted to everyone else, as you already pointed out to them when you reminded them of the ‘ Rights of Man.’

“Moreover, now that the arrangements have been made, is it suitable that Europe should learn that liberty is for the licentious only ? As for you, my dear nephew, I am deeply affected by all the tokens of your affection for me. I appreciate it most keenly, and I would love you every day more and more, if it were possible for my tenderness towards you to increase. I am very unhappy at leaving you, but the sacrifice is made.”

Whilst the excitement in Paris grew day by day, it was not less in the neighbourhood of the Castle of Bellevue. On the very day on which Madame Adélaïde wrote the above letter to the King, an officer of the National Guards of Meudon sent the following information to the Commander of the National Guards of the canton of Sévres :—

<sup>1</sup> According to the Marquis de Ferrières and others, this child whom the Queen showed instead of the little prince was a son of Monsieur de Saint Sauveur, and bore a strong resemblance to the Dauphin.

"I have just ascertained that Mesdames de France intend leaving Bellevue on the 14th of this month, and are going to Rome. Their departure is causing the greatest alarm amongst the inhabitants of the canton. They imagine that they intend to join the French fugitives and thus effect a counter-revolution. I have been told as a fact, that some evil-doers intend to set fire to the castle immediately after their departure. If I can succeed in discovering the perpetrators of this plot, I shall have the honour of informing you at once."

This letter was sent on immediately to Bailly, Mayor of Paris ; he kept it for six days and then found no other course before him but to forward it to Lafayette, who, being equally embarrassed, handed it over to Berthier, Commander of the National Guard at Versailles, requesting him to communicate it to the officials of the department (Seine-et-Oise) so that they might make the necessary inquiries. Not knowing how to act, the latter simply sent the letter and those of Bailly, Lafayette and Berthier to the district of Versailles from whence they returned to the Municipality of Sèvres. Thus, the information which had been sent from this town on the 6th February came back there on the 14th at eleven o'clock at night. The Mayor received the packet of letters, and being puzzled as to what he was supposed to do, put it aside and waited. No doubt, these are very petty incidents, nevertheless they show very clearly how the Government officials stood with regard to their responsibilities. They either did not know what to do or else they were afraid to act.

Amongst the citizens who were so upset by the prospect of Mesdames leaving France, a certain number had a right to feel some alarm. Marat was well aware of the fact and had taken good care that it should be known that the Princesses did not intend to pay their creditors

before leaving the country. The following curious letter, written by Madame de Narbonne to Alliot de Mussey, makes it evident that Madame Labille-Guiard, painter by appointment to their Highnesses, was one of the first to take alarm concerning a picture for which she had not been paid.

"MONSIEUR,—Madame Adélaïde wishes you to pay on Monday, 14 inst., 5000 francs which are due to Madame Guiard, artist, for a picture which she has painted. As she sent me on this matter a letter, which, if she were not mad, I should consider most impertinent, I should be glad if there were no delay. If you have not the amount at the present moment, tell Lalleman to advance it to you and you will return it when you are able. He could undertake to give this sum of 5000 livres to Madame Guiard, as he has to go to her house on my account to fetch several portraits that are there, amongst others that of the Infanta which will be brought to you so that you may hand it over to M. Varanchan."<sup>1</sup>

We might also quote a letter from the creditors of the Pinet inheritance, which proves how anxious they were on account of Mesdames' departure.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Amongst these pictures of Madame Guiard, historians of art may perhaps recognise the two great full-length portraits of Madame Adélaïde and Madame Victoire which have been replaced in their former apartment on the ground floor in the Castle of Versailles. As for the portrait of the Infanta, it is very probably the one we find in an adjoining room of the same gallery. The artist had been entrusted with its execution many years after the death of the Princess, this accounts for the fanciful costume and scenery.

<sup>2</sup> "MONSIEUR (Alliot de Mussey),

"Public rumour—and this rumour appears to be exact—asserts that Mesdames are leaving very shortly for Italy. This event has alarmed a number of people who have done business with them, and I will not conceal from you, Monsieur, that the creditors of the Pinet inheritance, on whose behalf I have already had the honour of writing to you, have informed me of their anxiety, and requested me to speak

By degrees the whole kingdom was ablaze with the news. When the King saw everybody so much alarmed—the journalists, the creditors, the sections of the commune of Paris and even the market women—then he began to waver and appeared to regret having given his consent so easily. Fearing that he might take back his word, Madame Adélaïde thought it wise to make him write down his authorisation, thus, he could not reverse his opinion without forswearing himself.

On the 10th February she wrote to him :—

“ All the commotion that has been stirred up around us has not made us change our minds, as you may well believe, my dear nephew. Now they are deliberately spreading about the rumour that you disapprove of our journey, and that you only gave your consent because you thought you could not do otherwise. They have chosen this course because they know that it is the only one that can justify a resistance which they have no right to make. I therefore beseech you to *write* to me that you approve of our journey although you grieve to be so long without seeing us. Say that you hope our absence may not be prolonged, and that, as Italy has been informed of our arrival, it is impossible for us to alter our decision without causing a very bad impression. Mention that you know and approve of our motives, which are pure, and that we have no idea of fomenting trouble. These are some of the things I should wish you to write to me, and I beg of you to allow me to show the letter if it becomes necessary.

“ As you may guess, this letter is meant for you only. Nevertheless, I have another one ready which you may show, if you think it necessary or wish to do so. You

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to you on this matter. The fact that the sum owed to them is very large and that they are in great straits will, no doubt, justify the measures which they are taking in order to save the little that remains to them. They will be much obliged to you, Sir, if you will take some steps towards reassuring them. . . .

DULONG.”

will answer as I have asked you to, and then you will burn this one without delay."

Further on, in another handwriting, which is neither that of the Duchesse de Narbonne nor of her son, we read the following lines :—

" At the end of your letter, in a post-scriptum, you will request me to send you Count Louis or M. de Chastellux as soon as we shall have reached Chambéry. Say that you would prefer my choice falling on Count Louis as he is younger and will travel faster."

Did Louis XVI. comply with his aunt's request? We cannot tell. One thing only is certain : he did not withdraw his consent to their journey.

On the same day, although they had already obtained a passport from the King, Mesdames again demanded one from the Municipality. But the Municipality persisted in their decision taken on the 4th inst.<sup>1</sup> In default of a passport, the Home Secretary, on behalf of the King, requested the Municipality to do all that was necessary in order to facilitate the departure of Mesdames. The

<sup>1</sup> It is interesting to read, word for word, the account of this decision. The wording is strangely involved and proves very clearly that the Municipal authorities were putting as much ill-will as possible into the matter. They did not dare flatly to refuse the passport, and yet they were afraid of offending the Sections, so they chose another course that says more for their prudence than for their straightforwardness.

*" Thursday, 10th February 1791.*

" The Vice-President read a letter from the Mayor in which was included one from Mesdames, the King's aunts, who persist in demanding a passport, and request him to tell them on what day he can deliver it to them. The matter was duly discussed, and the Municipal authorities decided to abide by the decision taken on the 4th. inst. ; for, according to the principles of the Constitution, every citizen has a right to go where he will in the kingdom, therefore the Municipality has not the right either to prohibit or to authorize such a step which every individual is free to take. Moreover, Mesdames are so well known that they cannot require a passport such as the authorities deliver to citizens who need a document proving their condition and identity."

authorities waited three days before deciding what answer was to be made to this demand. Finally, on 13th February they sent Bailly with the following reply :—

“ Sir, I received your letter of the 10th inst. You cannot doubt but that the Municipality of Paris is ever eager, in all circumstances, to watch over and maintain public order and tranquillity.”<sup>1</sup>

In spite of the hopes entertained by Madame Adélaïde, the excitement of the populace, far from dying out, seemed only to increase. Following the proposal of the Mauconseil Section, thirty-two sections of Paris assembled in order to consult together concerning the measures to be taken in view of preventing the departure of Mesdames. It was decided that certain commissaries should present an address to the National Assembly. On the 14th February, the speaker of the group appeared at the bar and pronounced the following discourse :—

“ Whilst you are working with courage to raise up the stately structure of public liberty, each citizen, standing at his post, learns his duty from your decrees and supports you by his efforts. Some members of the Royal Family intend to leave France. This news has alarmed the capital, and the Commune of Paris has charged us to acquaint you with the fears entertained by the majority of the Sections. We do not believe that the King’s aunts intend to encourage, by their presence, the fugitives who dare to threaten their fatherland, like ill-born children

<sup>1</sup> This ambiguous reply is supposed to have been drawn up by François Valentin Mulot, who was then Vice-President of the Municipal Corps. He was directly under the influence of the Sections, and it was he who conducted the affair. This ambitious man had been Canon of the Church of Saint Victor. He had cast aside the cowl in order to throw himself into politics ; and, all through the Revolution, we find him making use of his ready wit and eloquence.



who raise their hand against their mother. We do not believe that, following the example of these deserters, they mean to squander away, far from their country, riches that have not been given to them for that purpose. We do not believe that the departure of Mesdames is a clever experiment made in order to rouse the people and thus have a right to complain of them. We ask you to make a law concerning the *modus vivendi* of the present reigning dynasty. One of your members has already drawn your attention to this matter. So far, you have only regulated the question of the prerogatives. Your duty towards the Nation requires that you should discuss this matter, which is so closely connected with the basis of the Constitution. By an adjournment that has already been pronounced, this law was promised to us."

The orator then described how the French fugitives were raising up the foreign enemy, making ready to invade the country with their help, "holding high the burning brand of Civil War." Meanwhile, for want of a promised law, the King, "the Model of all the Kings of the earth," did not think that he had a right to detain members of his family from leaving the country. On this particular day Mirabeau was presiding. As he had already sold himself to the Court, he made a vague uncertain reply, which bore small resemblance to the retort by which he had confounded the Marquis de Dreux-Brézé, two years before. Whilst the Assembly was listening to the Parisian delegates, the market-women went and begged the King to induce Mesdames to give up their journey; they then paid a visit to the Princesses and made the same request. Now, if the Sections of Paris imagined that by making a law concerning the movements of the Royal Family they had provided the King with the means of preventing the departure of his aunts, they were very much mistaken. Madame Adélaïde was not to be baffled, and to all the

legal arguments brought to bear on her, she retorted by others that were equally sound.

On the 17th February she wrote to the King :—

“ Our affection for you, my dear nephew, and our patriotism, from which we have never swerved, are too well known for us to have been affected by what was said yesterday in the Assembly.<sup>1</sup> Since this discussion, the Assembly must own that we are subject to the common law, the same as everybody else,—and this decision will be in our favour, since the law upholds the liberty of man,—or else it must decide that you have direct authority over all your family. You have already given us your permission to travel. I now ask you to let us start. You know our reasons, and how pure are the motives that guide us. It is with the greatest regret that we are leaving you, my dear nephew. You are so well aware of our affection for you that there is no need for this fresh assurance of our love. As long as we shall live our hearts will be full of these sentiments.

“ MARIE-ADÉLAÏDE.

“ VICTOIRE.”

No doubt, in order to add solemnity to this letter, it was signed by both the Princesses. Here we must place one more remark concerning this correspondence. Madame Adélaïde writes for herself and for her sister ; nevertheless, in reality, she guides, directs and commands ; she is, so to speak, at the head of the firm. Sometimes, she says “ We,” but more frequently, even when using the plural, she is speaking in her own name. Thus she says :—“ *I* had already given up Brussels, . . . *I* have found my man, . . . *my* decision is taken ; . . . *I* prefer Italy to Spain,

<sup>1</sup> As she was writing, Mme. Adélaïde had before her the *Moniteur* of 16th February, which gave an account of the sitting to which she alludes. In reality, the Parisian delegates appeared at the bar on the 14th February.

... embrace the Queen for *me*, etc." We may ask ourselves whether Madame Victoire was ever consulted. What was her idea? Did she also prefer Italy? Did she send her love to the Queen? We cannot tell. Nothing is known about Madame Victoire, who always, as on this occasion, passes by like a shadow—the silent, intangible shadow of her elder sister.

We cannot vouch for the truth of the statement that Mesdames, being alarmed at the rumour that the market-women meant to come up to Bellevue and drag them back to Paris by main force, thwarted their plan by returning to the Tuileries and sleeping there. It is, however, a fact that they were at Bellevue on 19th February, when they were warned that the mob would arrive during the night.<sup>1</sup> Without waiting to complete their last dispositions, they hastened to depart. As she was about to step into her carriage, Madame Adélaïde paused to scribble a good-bye to the King:—

" 19th February 1791.

" I am in despair, my dear nephew, that circumstances force *me* to leave much sooner than *we* intended to. I was looking forward to seeing you to-morrow and to being able to take leave of you and the Queen, as I told you. But we find it absolutely necessary to depart at once. Continue to bestow your friendship on me. Let me hear from you sometimes; it will be my only consolation during this separation, that is more painful to me than I can say. I trust you are quite sure of this, and that you are convinced that my tender affection for you is beyond expression.

" MARIE-ADELAÏDE.

<sup>1</sup> Everybody (or, at least, nearly everybody) agrees in pointing out Count de Virieu, as the person who hurried from Paris in order to hasten Mesdames' departure. Count François Henri de Virieu was the son of a lady who had been attached to their household, and who died in 1764. He had just become a member of the Constitutional Assembly. He was an intimate friend of Louis de Narbonne, whose liberal views he shared.

"Embrace the Queen for us both, and tell her how distressed we are not to see her again, as we had promised, and that we love her with all our hearts. We are about to start."

In the evening of the same day, the daughters of Louis XV. left their Castle of Bellevue, which they were never to see again. They were escorted by Count Louis de Narbonne, to whom they had entrusted the care of their journey. The mission would have been a delicate one for any nobleman, but it was particularly so for the Count, as he was openly attached to the Constitutional party, and consequently disapproved of the emigration. Moreover, it might become a difficult task if the excitement that prevailed in Paris should reach the provinces through which the Princesses were to pass. But the man to whom this mission had been confided was the godson of Madame Adélaïde, and moreover her gentleman-in-waiting. He was much beholden to her and, besides, he must have made it a point of honour to remain a gentleman under all circumstances and in the face of all. One thing seemed to bode well: Count Louis had just got out of a similar dilemma in a very clever way. He had been made Colonel of the Piedmontese regiment that had been stationed at Besançon since the month of November 1788. When he reached his post he found the town in a great state of excitement, as the members of the Parliament of Franche-Comté felt their privileges were being encroached on by the recent establishment of Provincial Assemblies. Besides, when the States-General had been called together, Besançon, the old free Imperial city, had claimed, with some arrogance, the right of having a special representative. During the interval, the cruel winter of 1788-1789 had been deeply felt in the mountainous part of the country; the rivers were frozen and, when the thaw came, they flooded the land, destroying the fields and bringing on dearth and famine. At Besançon, the public mind was very much

excited. Riots had broken out in the month of March 1789; the bakers' shops had been plundered, and the magistrates had been molested by the angry mob. However, under the guidance of the Colonel of the Piedmontese Regiment, the repression had been as mild as possible. In July, after the taking of the Bastille, the excitement began again. Narbonne went to Paris to get information, and, on his return, he succeeded in pacifying Besançon by giving a true account of the event. His words were so persuasive that in the town-hall he was hailed "citizen of Besançon." However, a short time afterwards the public mind was once more set on fire by the accidental explosion of a barrel of gunpowder in a chateau in the neighbourhood of the city. The excited mob at once imagined that a great plot was being made in view of a general massacre of the people. Narbonne intervened once more, and so successfully that he was borne home in triumph by an enthusiastic crowd. In the official account of this incident we read that the "people were in a frenzy of delight at being able to count this generous nobleman as their fellow-citizen." His popularity was so great that in September 1789, he was elected Commander-in-chief of the National Guards of the Doubs, which had been lately organised. In this position, he took an active part in all the affairs of the town, and busied himself principally with the all-important question of providing food. He reassured the rural districts that were, as is well known, in terror of the dreaded plunderers who spread alarm all over France. He presided over the Committee that was to divide Franche-Comté into departments, and, during his frequent journeys to Paris, he pleaded successfully in favour of the claims of his adopted fellow-citizens. In these troubled times, the maintenance of public order gave him much to do. Unswerving in his purpose, he endeavoured rather to appease than to chastise; nevertheless, he was obliged to hang

some of the rebels in the mutiny of August 1789. In the spring of the following year, a fresh riot broke out around two cart-loads of corn that some peasants had attempted to get out of Besançon. Narbonne threw himself into the thickest of the fight, and, but for the devotion of some of his men, he would have lost his life. In consequence, the National Guards showed him the most unbounded gratitude, and when, later on, the gazettes in Paris attacked him, nearly every paper in France took up his defence. In his old age, an eye-witness of these disturbances, the great historian Joseph Droz, still spoke with admiration of the clever and generous conduct of Narbonne. "You see," said he one day to Villemain, who has reported this remark,<sup>1</sup> "in order to bring about successfully and with impunity so great a Revolution, all the difficult posts should be filled by such men. And where could we find even two or three of them?"<sup>2</sup> It was just after going through

<sup>1</sup> *Souvenirs Contemporains*, vol. i. p. 21.

<sup>2</sup> These details, which complete and indeed rectify on more than one point Villemain's report, are drawn from the interesting article of M. Ed. Besson, "Le Comte Louis de Narbonne à Besançon, 1788-90" (*Society of Emulation of Doubs*, 19th December 1889, in-8, pp. 108).

During the troubles in Franche-Comté, the Count and Countess Louis kept up a close correspondence with the Duchesse de Narbonne, and the information contained in their letters belongs to history in general. For this reason, we hope the reader will pardon us for placing here a few extracts. Shortly after giving birth to her second and last daughter at Bellevue, the Countess had hastened to join her husband. As soon as she reached Besançon, she wrote to her mother-in-law:—

"Here I am at last at Besançon, my dear Mamma, after running the risk of being stifled with kisses. Everybody hastened to overwhelm me with honours that I certainly did not much deserve, and to assure me that they all love M. de Narbonne. I was very happy to see that I had not been deceived. It is true, no one could take more trouble in order to pacify the town. He sleeps neither by day nor by night, he is on foot all day long in spite of his leg, which is in a rather serious condition. Thanks to his energy, we are in peace and have provisions; but for him we should have been without bread in three days. Fortunately we have nothing to fear for the next few days, as flour is expected, so we hope that we shall be spared this misfortune, which would be no small one. . . ."

this laborious and honourable campaign, that Madame Adélaïde's gentleman-in-waiting came and placed himself at her disposal. On 19th February 1791, at ten o'clock at night, the two princesses fled from Bellevue like real

A fortnight later Count Louis writes in his turn :—

"I received your letter, Mamma, and it doubled my regret at being so far from you. I see that you are still anxious, and I am sorry to say you are quite right. Nothing can be more alarming than the reports that reach us, and it is impossible to say what will be the consequences of all this trouble. My one idea in applying to people belonging to the opposite party was to get at the exact truth ; however, as you do not approve, I shall give up my scheme. To-morrow, I shall take the Countess Louise to Plombières and hasten back to pass my review and that of M. du Lau. I shall also assist at that of the Viscount de Laval and that of M. de Schomberg. The distances are so great that I shall not be able to get away even for one week. You see, Mamma, that to the public misfortunes, private vexations are added, and it is certainly one to have to leave the Countess Louise, who still makes me very happy."

But Plombières was not calmer than Besançon, and the young Countess was obliged to give up her cure, and flee from France. She writes to her mother-in-law :—

"You will never guess, my dear Mamma, where I have sought refuge from all the turmoil that surrounded us at Plombières ! For four days I have been in Basel, and even here we are barely in safety. Huningue and St Louis, which are a quarter of a mile from us, are all in flames. A château that is four miles from here is to be set on fire. This morning the mob went to the Jews' quarter and plundered their houses. The Governor of Huningue has warned the inhabitants of Basel to be on their guard, because the rioters may come for Madame de Polignac, who is here. We should not feel very easy if we did not know that in less than an hour thirty thousand men can be called out. We have sent M. Necker to try and quiet the people. He is followed by the regret of all the inhabitants of this country. He was staying at the same inn as I. He dined in public. All day long there were two or three hundred people outside his door, and finally, on the day of his departure, he was obliged to show himself several times so as to prevent the crowd from increasing. I hope, my dear Mamma, that you are going to have a little tranquillity. It is time that these troubles should end, and now that the people have got back M. Necker we may hope that they will be satisfied. I do not know when I shall be able to meet you. I intend remaining in Switzerland until Franche-Comté is quiet again, and I shall reach Besançon by Yverdun. I am here with Madame de La

fugitives. In borrowed carriages they drove silently to the high-road to Fontainebleau, where they met their berline and the other coaches that were to be used on their long journey. Madame Adélaïde took with her the

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Marck. We intend to travel together and to see the most curious sights. I shall then go to see Count Louis, from whom I have been separated for ages, as I was obliged to leave for Plombières, or else I should have died of fear in that horrid hole, where we were threatened with so much danger. Poor Abbé Dillon! They simply wanted to cut his head off!!! You may imagine how frightened I was! So I left at once. Nothing happened to me on the journey, but, at Schlestadt, I was in great danger. I arrived at ten o'clock at night. Two men got up at the back of my carriage. I do not know what they meant to do, but the Chevalier de Narbonne, who is not to be trifled with, put his head out of the coach window and, threatening them with two pistols, politely informed them that he would blow out their brains if they did not get down at once. They fled away immediately. Nevertheless, I was very much alarmed at the inn in Schlestadt, where I was told that a magistrate had had his head cut off that very day by some persons who bore him a grudge. This news made me resume my journey at one o'clock in the morning. Now, I have given you, my dear Mamma, a full account of all the dangers I have been through. . . ."

Whilst the young Countess was thus roaming over the high-roads, the excitement of the Francs-Comtois died away. Narbonne hastened to inform his mother of the improvement which had taken place:—

"I thank you with all my soul, Mamma, for giving me news about yourself. Nothing in the whole world is of greater interest to me. Other news, which I would rather not hear, reaches me, unfortunately only too soon. That which I am sending you from Besançon will free you from all anxiety. After having been in an alarming state of excitement, the town is now perfectly calm. The different parties that divide the city have all consented to listen to me, and, thanks to the confidence they show me, I am exercising a sort of dictatorship that enables me to prevent further evil. You know that my wife is at Basel. What do you advise me to write to her concerning her future movements? I should be happy to have her with you. The Chevalier could accompany her, and I would rather they were with you than here, where I am kept busy for more than fifteen hours a day. . . ."

Before the Duchess's answer reached her daughter-in-law, the latter had left Basel for Lausanne. On the 11th August she writes from this town:—

"My dear Mamma, it is such a long time since I heard from you that I am very anxious. I am certain that you have been distressed and



Duchess de Narbonne<sup>1</sup>—her old friend, from whom she was never to be separated again—four waiting-maids and two footmen. Madame Victoire was accompanied by Monsieur and Madame de Chastellux, her lady- and gentleman-in-waiting and their children; like her sister she was also attended by four waiting-maids and two

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tormented by the late events, and this worry has affected your health. You would be very kind if you would send some news to Lausanne, where I have been for the last two days. . . . I hope I shall not be here over a fortnight or three weeks. I shall then meet M. de Narbonne, and we will then both go and assure you of our tender affection. The roads are not yet safe enough for me to attempt reaching Franche-Comté, but I hope this state of affairs will not last long. The confidence which the national troops have shown in M. de Narbonne makes me believe that the police regulations will be enforced, and that there will be no further cause for anxiety. I flatter myself with the hope that he will come and fetch me, for I do not feel quite reassured. There are a great many French people here, and it is difficult to find lodgings. Madame de la Marck, Madame de Caqueray and I were fortunate enough to find a charming little country-house, situated on the shores of the Lake of Geneva, facing the Alps. If we had arrived one hour later we would have been obliged to sleep in the street. Madame de Polignac is reduced to this sorry plight. She had hired a country-house near Berne, but she was requested to go elsewhere. I am afraid she will be treated in the same way at Geneva. The Prince de Conti is said to be at Soleure. It is asserted that no more Frenchmen will be allowed into Switzerland. There was even some talk of requesting us to leave" (*Arch. Nat.*, T. 568).

<sup>1</sup> Before leaving, the Duchess had hastily taken some decisions which may be regarded as a sort of will. The officials of the district of Versailles found this note amongst other papers in a cupboard in the hall of the Tingry Mansion. This is what they read:—

"My silver plate, my library and all my belongings, except those that are at La Bove or which I specify further on, to my eldest son, the Viscount de Narbonne. My Japan-ware, my China-ware, my pictures and the marble bust of Madame Adélaïde by Le Moine, to my younger son, Count Louis de Narbonne. My snuff-boxes and the jewels that I shall not have disposed of are to be divided between the two brothers, according to their choice. If, amongst these gifts, there be some object that one or the other may want to get rid of, I wish him to ascertain first whether his brother wishes to have it. This being done, he will be free to do what he likes with it, either to sell it or exchange it" (*Arch. Nat.*, T. 568).

footmen. A chaplain, two doctors and two equerries made up their suite.<sup>1</sup> It is asserted that Count de Narbonne urged Madame Elizabeth, the King's sister, to join her aunts, but it was in vain. Abbé Delille, the author of the "Jardins" (Gardens) would have travelled with them, but the Commune refused to give him a passport.<sup>2</sup> Although the Princesses left so hurriedly, they did not forget the poor of Sèvres, to whom they left a gift of twelve hundred francs. They also remembered Abbé Séjan, the former parish-priest of Meudon, who had lost his post because he would not take the oath to the Constitution. They left him a thousand francs, a pension of twelve hundred livres and a sum to pay his debts.<sup>3</sup> The Princesses drove full-speed along the road to Lyons, and at dawn, on the following day, they changed horses at Fontainebleau without encountering any difficulty. At the gates of Moret they met with the first serious obstacle to their progress. Their passport was thought insufficient. The crowd surrounded them, crying "A la lanterne!" The National Guards were about to give way, when a detachment of the Hainault Chasseurs, that had followed them from Fontainebleau, charged the mob, and cleared the road.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Count Louis de Narbonne, who was to conduct the journey, was seconded by Joseph de Narbonne, who emigrated beyond the Rhine, went to Rome in 1794, and from there to Spain. In 1803 he returned to France and married Mademoiselle de Bauffremont in 1804. On the Restoration he was made Field-Marshal (*Arch. Nat.*, BB 30, 253). Leone Vicchi, *Les Français à Rome pendant la Convention* p. c. iv. I am inclined to think that this was the Chevalier de Narbonne, whose name often appears in the Countess Louise's letters.

<sup>2</sup> Villemain, *Souvenirs Contemporains*, vol. i. p. 22.

<sup>3</sup> *Arch. Nat.*, T. 381. *Arch. (Seine et Oise)*, A. 1494.

<sup>4</sup> "The Municipality of Moret drew up an account of this first incident and sent it to the National Assembly:—

"Public rumour having informed the Municipality that Mesdames, the King's aunts, were to pass through this town, having also learnt in the same way that this journey had caused much anxiety amongst the Parisians, we ordered the National Guards to prevent the ladies from proceeding without a passport. The Commander immediately

On the same day, in Paris, the King wrote to the National Assembly informing them that he had just heard of his aunts' departure, but that, as he felt convinced that they could not be deprived of the right of going where they pleased, he had not thought fit to prevent their journey, although he was much grieved at being separated from them. This news raised violent indignation in the Assembly and amongst the public. Camus requested that as long as Mesdames were absent they should not enjoy their revenues drawn on the Civil List. Martineau replied that the decree concerning the Civil List had been settled for the whole reign of Louis XVI. Making use of the arguments which had been pleaded at the bar on 14th February by the members of the Paris Commune, Barnave voted that the Committee of the Constitution should be

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caused the gates of the City to be closed. A certain individual (Narbonne ?) wearing the Cross of St Louis, went to the governor of the Commune and from thence to the Municipality to get Mesdames' passport signed. He produced : 1° a passport signed by the King and countersigned by the Minister of Foreign Affairs; 2° a notice from the Paris Municipality, signed *Joly*, Secretary and Town Clerk. This notice says that as the Law allows every citizen to come and go within the Kingdom, the Municipality does not think that Mesdames, the King's aunts, can be deprived of enjoying this privilege. It was noticed that the wording of this document was in contradiction with the passport granted by the King. In the former it is question of 'coming and going in the Kingdom,' whereas, in the latter, 'a journey to Rome' is mentioned. Whilst the matter was being considered at the town hall, thirty-three dragoons, who were escorting Mesdames and the members of their suite, with arms in hand, rushed to the town gates to force an opening. Terror spread through the city, and being unable to withstand this display of violence, we ordered the gates to be opened. As Mesdames arrived here at seven in the morning after having journeyed part of the night, no doubt, and seemed rather to be fleeing than to be travelling, the Municipality drew up the present account so that they might not be accused of favouring their escape." The National Assembly instituted an inquiry into the share taken by the Hainaut Chasseurs in this skirmish. M. de Ségur, colonel of the regiment, took the defence of the commander of the detachment, who, according to his view, had simply followed orders in escorting Mesdames and could not be accused of any act of violence.



<p>LOUIS XVI.</p> <p><i>Aux vains attrails Préferam les douceurs LOUIS veut s'enchaîner Pour ne s songer</i></p>		<p>ROI DE FRANCE</p> <p><i>D'une brillante gloire D'une solide PAIX, le char de la Victoire sera l'honneur des Français</i></p>
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*Publié pour le Paix de 1763. la 8<sup>e</sup> année de son Règne. A Paris. Rue de Courcelles. Jodry, P.*

(Reproduced from an old engraving)



obliged to introduce a bill on the following day, by which the "duties and obligations of the Royal Family" should be made clear. Fréteau, Martineau, Goupil, Foucault, Pétion, Malouet and d'André took part in the discussion, after which, by a great majority, it was decided that the said Committee should immediately introduce a bill concerning the rights and duties of all the members of the present reigning family, and would consider whether, in a critical moment, citizens could be prevented from leaving the kingdom. In the evening, a crowd went to the Luxembourg Palace, where Monsieur, the King's brother, had his residence. Not content with making him show himself, the people obliged him and the Princess, his wife, to leave the Palace and allow themselves to be escorted to the Tuileries.

In the meantime Mesdames had resumed their journey and reached Burgundy. The authorities of the department of la Côte-d'Or had been informed by the circular which the minister had sent out on the 9th February to all the departments on their itinerary that Mesdames were soon to arrive. On 15th February he had replied that he was already aware of the news, but that, as it might be a cause of disturbances, he would abstain from taking any steps that were more likely to excite the public mind than to appease it. He therefore contented himself with forwarding the Minister's letter to the districts through which they were to pass. Three days later the authorities of Arnay-le-Duc, situated in the south of the department, informed their colleagues at Dijon that the master of the post-house had warned them that Mesdames would reach Arnay on Monday, 21st February.<sup>1</sup> As the Princesses were travelling with a considerable suite, the

<sup>1</sup> On the 7th February Madame de Narbonne had ordered Mesdames' treasurer to give ten thousand francs to a certain de Lépine, Comptroller of the post-houses, who was to start ahead and arrange for fresh horses (*Arch. Nat.*, T. 381).

latter had demanded some extraordinary repairs to be made to the road ; but the local authorities had refused to comply with his request, as they considered that it did not concern the public welfare. They replied that " the citizens of this town see this journey with some displeasure, and may possibly decide to arrest these ladies." What was to be done if their passports were not in order ? The Arnay authorities called for precise instructions ! On 19th February the governor of the department replied that they had done well to refuse to grant the repairs demanded, as Mesdames might be affected by the general excitement and give up their journey. As for the passport, the Declaration of the Rights of Man had made it quite superfluous. Relying on the decision taken by the National Assembly on 14th February, the departmental authorities considered that they had merely to submit if Mesdames showed a passport signed by the King. This, then, was the state of affairs at Arnay-le-Duc when, in the afternoon of 22nd February, the Count de Narbonne, preceding Mesdames, arrived at the gates of the city. The National Guards were in possession of the town and had orders to " arrest all strangers and make them show the passports with which they must be provided." Madame Adélaïde's gentleman-in-waiting was conducted to the town-hall, where he made himself known and produced his papers. These consisted in the passport by which the King sanctioned his aunts' journey to Rome, and the decision taken by the Municipality of Paris on 10th February,<sup>1</sup> acknowledging that every citizen had a right to travel freely throughout the kingdom, but refusing again to deliver a passport to Mesdames, as they considered they had no need of it.

All things having been duly considered, the Municipal

<sup>1</sup> An attempt was made to raise difficulties about a figure written over another. The 10th February had been changed into the 14th. This incident, however, had no consequences.

authorities of Arnay-le-Duc decided, in compliance with the instructions they had received from the governor of the department, that the ladies might continue their journey. In order to inform them of their decision, the officials hastened to the post-house where the Princesses were waiting, but as they drew near to the inn they found themselves surrounded by a large gathering of the inhabitants. Voices rose from the crowd: "Are the passports in order?" "Have you decided to stop their journey?" Alarmed at the shouts and threatening attitude of the crowd, the Municipal authorities merely replied that they could not give an opinion on the validity of the passports. Thereupon, taking the law into their own hands, the people replied that they intended to examine the question themselves. They then returned to the town-hall, where they improvised a general meeting of the inhabitants of the commune. The town-clerk was forced to read aloud the documents produced by M. de Narbonne, and the procureur of the commune called on the Assembly to deliberate. We may easily imagine the uproar in which this sham deliberation took place, when, under the influence of the wildest irritation, this assembly of the people ousted the legal authorities and, sitting in a small provincial town-hall, attempted to impose their will as the general law of the country. As is always the case on such occasions, a few ringleaders had organised and governed the whole movement. They drew up an account of this so-called deliberation, and the wording of this document is so elaborate that, as we can easily judge, it had been prepared and perhaps even been drawn up beforehand, when they were at leisure:—

"Considering that on 14th inst. the citizens of Paris moved the National Assembly to grant, in their wisdom, a decree preventing all the members of the Royal Family from leaving the kingdom unless the legislative body had



provided them with a passport ; that the National Assembly has promised to consider this petition ; that it has not yet given an opinion on this interesting matter which concerns the public law ; that consequently Mesdames, the King's aunts, whose journey beyond the kingdom has called forth this petition and caused so much alarm amongst the citizens of the Empire, should not have started before the emission and promulgation of this decree which the kingdom awaits of the wisdom of the National Assembly, and that such a sudden journey can but give rise to apprehensions ; considering that the King's passport is prior to 14th February, date of the petition, and that in his letter of 19th inst., addressed to the governor of this town, the governor of the department expresses the wish that the progress of Mesdames, the King's aunts, be arrested if they have not a legal passport delivered after 14th inst., and that they shall suffer no hindrance if they can produce such a one, we have decided to inform the department of these circumstances and of the decision the commune has hereby taken, to stop the journey of Mesdames, the King's aunts, until the instructions of the department reach the Municipality . . . that the Municipal authorities shall be requested to tell M. Maugras, master of the post-house, that he must abstain from supplying horses to Mesdames and that he must not allow their carriages to leave his courtyard. Nevertheless, he may send back to Ivry<sup>1</sup> the horses which he had ordered from there, and M. de Narbonne shall be free to go where he please with as many horses as he may require. . . ."

Let us pause for one moment and recall to our minds the position of a King's daughter at the old court of France. Wherever she bent her steps, the laws of etiquette surrounded her with an atmosphere of abject flattery, homage and respect. Let us remember that the daughters of

<sup>1</sup> The next stage.

Louis XV. had been brought up as spoilt children and that they were accustomed to see everyone obey their slightest whims and fancies. If we recall all these circumstances, we may succeed in realising, to some extent, the amazement that must have overwhelmed Madame Adélaïde, the princess who is said to have been so proud, when she witnessed the insolent resistance of the miserable little citizens of Arnay-le-Duc. Louis de Narbonne had assisted at the meeting and had been charged with informing Mesdames of the decision we have just read of. It was four o'clock in the afternoon. With the clear-sightedness and coolness that he had displayed at Besançon in similar circumstances, he made up his mind at once, and dictated to Mesdames the following letter which they addressed to the President of the National Assembly :—

“MONSIEUR LE PRÉSIDENT,—With the King's permission we left Bellevue, having in our possession a passport signed by his Majesty, and a decision of the Paris Municipality, stating that we have the right to travel through France. Nevertheless, in spite of the wish expressed by the Municipality and the district, we have been arrested to-day at Arnay-le-Duc, for the reasons mentioned in the account we have the honour of sending you. The commune of Arnay-le-Duc seems to have been influenced by the fact that we have no passport delivered by the National Assembly. According to a decree, no more passports are to be delivered except to members of Parliament. As, according to the law, we are now mere citizens and do not wish to be considered as anything else, we did not think suitable to claim any sort of privilege. But this same title confers on us the rights enjoyed by all the citizens of this Empire, and these we claim with all our might, trusting in the justice of the Assembly. We therefore beseech you, *Monsieur le*

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*Président*, to obtain for us the necessary instructions allowing us to continue our journey.

"We are, most respectfully, your very humble and obedient servants,<sup>1</sup>

"MARIE ADÉLAÏDE.

"VICTOIRE LOUISE."

The partisans of the Old Régime have bitterly reproached Madame Adélaïde's gentleman-in-waiting with this letter. They cannot forgive him for having imposed the title of "citoyennes" on the two princesses and to have lowered their Royal Highnesses by appealing to the President of the National Assembly, thus bowing to the new power, the insolent rival of the King's authority. But Narbonne knew what he was about. He knew Madame Adélaïde and understood the haughtiness of her character. If he had allowed her to follow her own inclinations, she and her sister would have gone headlong towards a catastrophe. He had mixed with the crowds and learnt that, if it is most dangerous to defy them when one is the weak side, it is almost always possible to disarm them by making apparent concessions. Mirabeau was one of his best friends,<sup>2</sup> and although his influence over the Assembly had decreased considerably, he did not doubt but that he still had enough to be able to turn to the best account the regard and the confidence which the Princesses showed towards the mandatories

<sup>1</sup> This letter is exhibited in the museum of the National Archives, under this number: 1209 A. The handwriting is unknown, and the signatures alone are autographs. As usual, Madame Adélaïde's writing is very firm, whereas that of Madame Victoire is almost illegible. The full name of this princess was *Marie-Louise Thérèse-Victoire*, and I wonder whether she often signed herself as above: "*Victoire-Louise*." On the contrary, I have reason to believe that this signature is very rare, if not unique, and I think it can only be accounted for by the excitement of the moment.

<sup>2</sup> Talleyrand was fond of saying that Mirabeau had granted his confidence to three persons only: to Narbonne, to Lauzun, and to the Duke himself.

of the nation. Finally, there is no reason for believing that Narbonne was insincere in dictating this letter; he was a staunch Constitutionalist and believed in the Assembly's authority as much as in that of the King.

The Commune of Arnay despatched Dr Billequin to Dijon to inform the departmental authorities of what was taking place. At the same time Narbonne started for Paris, bearing Mesdames' message.

His godmother had also entrusted him with a letter for the King; it was written in the same measured terms as the other, and we can again detect the influence of the gentleman-in-waiting.

"MY DEAR NEPHEW,—I am sending M. de Narbonne to inform you of all that has happened since our departure. He will tell you that as far as Saulieu<sup>1</sup> we were very well treated. There we encountered some minor difficulties that were soon removed, thanks to the wisdom of the Municipal officials. Those of Arnay-le-Duc, where we are detained, have surely the same good-will, but not as much power, for we are obliged to remain here until, in concert with the National Assembly, you provide us with the means of pursuing the journey that we undertook with your consent and approval. It appears absolutely necessary to us that a decree be issued and we beg you to obtain it for us. I have charged M. de Narbonne to take all the necessary measures according to your instructions, in order to secure the success of a journey which you have not disapproved of. You know how much I trust him; he has well justified the confidence I place in him by the way in which he has behaved in the somewhat difficult circumstances in which we have found ourselves during the last two days. *Adieu*, my dear nephew, we embrace you most heartily."

<sup>1</sup> The stage preceding Arnay-le-Duc.

Louis XVI., feeling embarrassed, turned to his ministers, and they, being equally undecided, appealed to Mirabeau, who, in the uncertainty, sought advice from his friend Count Auguste de La Marck. The latter replied :—

“ When I awoke, Pellenc (Mirabeau’s secretary) showed me your note. I went to bed at four o’clock in the morning. I had spent the night drinking. I warn you that my mind may not yet be very clear. However, this is my opinion with regard to the arrest of Mesdames, as far as it concerns you. They appeal to you ; they have sent Narbonne to you. Say all this when you go up into the tribune. Proclaim yourself their defender. Then the task will be easy, for, as yet, no law exists against them. To my mind there is something of antique virtue, something noble and yet simple. You will be eloquent, and, if necessary, you will kill Robespierre, the two Crancé and Barnave. *Bonjour !* ”

On 24th February Valdeck de Lessart, who had recently been appointed Minister for the Home Department, presented Mesdames’ letter to the President of the National Assembly, together with a copy of the account drawn up by the Commune of Arnay-le-Duc. At the same time he made known the King’s opinion, which was, in reality, that of Narbonne, Mirabeau, La Marck and the ministers : “ The King cannot regard otherwise than as an act contrary to the liberty that is granted to all citizens the opposition that Mesdames have encountered. His Majesty considers that, in the actual state of affairs, Mesdames cannot be deprived of this privilege. His Majesty, being bound to protect the liberty of all his subjects, wishes, therefore, that the National Assembly should take the necessary measures in order to relieve the Commune of Arnay-le-Duc from the doubts that made them detain Mesdames.”

This might be the King’s opinion, and that of all those

who respected the Constitution, but in the Assembly it raised the most violent and confused debates. Abbé Maury, who was the first to speak, reproved the inhabitants of Arnay for setting themselves up against their own Municipality: "The multitude can never be the organ of sound reason!" said he. According to his idea Mesdames could travel without a passport; no law obliged them to bear one, and the petition of the Commune of Paris was not a law. Consequently the people of Arnay-le-Duc had violated the Constitution. The Abbé then called on the National Assembly to censure the revolt of this Commune, and to declare that the people may never, even for a time, rise up against the rights of the administrative bodies, and, finally, to remove the obstacles that prevented Mesdames from enjoying a privilege that belonged to all.

In his turn Regnaud (of St Jean-d'Angély) said that the Commune of Arnay should be excused on account of the troubled times in which one lived. In his eyes their resistance was merely an "act of exaggerated patriotism," and, consequently, there was no occasion for solemnly disapproving of it. As for authorizing or forbidding Mesdames' journey, it was for the King and not for the Assembly to decide, there being no law on that subject. Fréteau also declared that the Commune of Arnay had committed an illegal act by substituting itself to the municipal heads. D'André proposed the following decree:—

"The National Assembly declares that there is no law to prevent Mesdames from continuing their journey."

Barnave expressed the view that the Commune had merely acted inconsiderately. According to his mind the National Assembly should content itself with declaring that it was about to introduce a bill concerning the rights and condition of the Royal Family. With difficulty

Mirabeau obtained leave to speak, and then claimed priority for his summing up, which ran thus :—

“Considering that no law exists in the kingdom by which the journey of Mesdames, the King’s aunts, may be prevented, the Assembly declares that there is no cause for deliberating on the account sent in by the Commune of Arnay-le-Duc, and decides to refer the matter to the executive power.”

In the midst of a great deal of murmuring he stated the grounds for his opinion. No law prohibited Mesdames travelling ; this was known by the National Assembly and the Commune of Arnay. A new law was demanded. As long as this law did not exist nothing could prevent the journey. Nevertheless, the Assembly had no right to cast the blame on the inhabitants of Arnay-le-Duc, for, by ordering the impression of the petition of the Commune of Paris, it had contributed to lead them into error. As Mirabeau again referred to the fact that no law prohibited Mesdames’ journey, Gourdan interrupted him by crying out that there was one—the welfare of the people. As future events were soon to prove, these momentary words fell on no deaf ears. But Mirabeau retorted that the welfare of the people did not demand that Mesdames should spend three or four more days on their journey. These Princesses had committed an imprudent action, but not an illegal one, and there was no question for the Assembly to consider. Why should it burden itself with a responsibility that was not its own ? The affair concerned the legislative body, and to it the matter should be referred. Tracy, the two Lameths, Camus, Levis and Beaumetz intervened and proposed various amendments to one or the other of the projects on hand. However, they could not come to an agreement, and finally, losing patience, the Baron de Menou exclaimed : “I think Europe will be very much surprised to hear that for

four hours the National Assembly busied itself with the departure of two ladies who prefer to hear mass in Rome rather than in Paris." This sally rallied all the members, and Mirabeau's view was adopted almost unanimously.

But if we think of the wild excitement that prevailed amongst the public, we shall easily understand that such a decision only increased the general discontent. In the evening of the same day a motley crowd of people of both sexes invaded the courtyards and gardens of the Tuileries, demanding with loud cries that the King should order Mesdames to turn back. However, in spite of the entreaties of Bailly, mayor of Paris, the King demurred. "It has always been and is still the fondest wish of my heart to show gentleness to my people," said he; "but it is also well to know how to combine mildness with firmness, so that they may learn that they are not made to dictate laws, but to obey them." Lafayette supported the King's reply by bringing out troops and six cannon with lighted match. At this sight the crowd dispersed itself.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A newsmonger writes thus :—

"With all possible speed the King despatched to his aunts the decision of the National Assembly, allowing them to leave the kingdom. In the evening, after the decree had been issued, he was asking everybody for M. de Narbonne, as he wanted to send him off on this mission, and enquired, with much impatience, where he was to be found. Someone said to him jokingly: 'Sire, if you want to find him, you must send to the Baroness de Staël.' The King took his word seriously and sent to the Baroness's house, where, as it happened, M. de Narbonne was found. It is now known that he was much opposed to Mesdames' departure, but Madame de Narbonne, who was prompted not only by her aristocratic ideas, but also by jealousy, easily removed all the objections raised by her husband. (Perhaps the journalist is here taking the mother-in-law for the daughter-in-law, or *vice versa*.) By all manner of means she wanted to get him away from Madame de Staël, who is ill, and even confined to her bed since his departure. Thus love, jealousy and the aristocracy have had a hand in this departure." As might be expected, this anecdote gave birth to a vaudeville. M. Stryenski has inserted in his book, *Mesdames de France* (pp. 196-197), a fragment of a dialogue taken from a comedy, called *Les intrigues de Madame de Staël*.



Narbonne started once more on the road to Burgundy, bearing an authentic copy of the decree of the National Assembly which he hastened to communicate to all the established authorities of Côte-d'Or and the town of Arnay-le-Duc.<sup>1</sup> But under pretence that the King had not made known his will and that a bill was being prepared concerning the position of the Royal Family, the Commune of Arnay-le-Duc persisted in maintaining Mesdames' arrest. Thus the world was given the hitherto unheard-of sight of a small meeting of the people of one locality holding in check the great Assembly that ruled the country. For this reason the ominous behaviour of this small and humble Commune is of so much importance in the History of the Revolution. It set an example that the great Commune of Paris was soon to follow in its struggle against the National Convention. Finding himself also detained as a prisoner at Arnay-le-Duc, the Count de Narbonne, as a last resource, informed the King, through Madame Adélaïde, of what was taking place:—

“MY DEAR NEPHEW,—In spite of the decree which you have obtained of the National Assembly, and according to which we should have been allowed to proceed immediately, we have been unable to obtain the consent of the Commune of Arnay-le-Duc. The Decree has been entered by the tribunal of the district

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To tell the truth, the dialogue is rather dull and insipid. In this play we hear the Swedish ambassadress reproving Narbonne for having neglected to come to her before taking Mesdames' letter to the King.

<sup>1</sup> Being anxious to secure his aunts' release, Louis XVI. had imagined that Narbonne had only to take with him the decree of the Assembly. But by this decree the “affair was referred to the executive power”—that is to say, it had to be completed by a letter signed by the King, countersigned by his Minister, enjoining the Commune of Arnay-le-Duc to let Mesdames continue their journey free from hindrance. Narbonne started without this letter. We shall see what further difficulties the ringleaders of Arnay-le-Duc managed to create in consequence of this negligence.

and sent by the Directory of the department to that of the district for execution. The district has handed it over to the Municipal authorities, who, though they do not appear to be opposed to it, have first allowed the Commune to take a resolution forbidding us to leave Arnay-le-Duc until the return of the delegates which they are despatching to the Assembly, and—I believe—to you also, begging you to forbid us to proceed on our journey, or rather, to have us brought back to Paris. Various detachments of the National Guards stationed in the neighbourhood have arrived here to guard us, and they adhere to this petition. I do not know what pretext can justify such a barefaced infraction of the law. I do not know whether I shall even receive positive communication of this singular decision. For fear of being forbidden to send you a messenger, I hasten to try to despatch this letter informing you of our cruel position, and begging you to take the most prompt and efficacious measures that your friendship for us may suggest to you.”<sup>1</sup>

Now it was to be feared that “the most prompt and efficacious means” would be a display of an armed force, as at Moret; and this was a two-edged weapon, which might very well be turned against the Princesses themselves, so Narbonne hastened to make Madame Adélaïde write another letter to the King:—

“MY DEAR NEPHEW,—“ We do not yet know what the Commune of Arnay-le-Duc means to do with us; it is, however, evident that they do not intend to let us leave. All these annoyances make us all the more anxious to leave this country for some time. I do not know whether the National Assembly will take any steps. If it refers to you, I beseech you, most earnestly, not to make

<sup>1</sup> This letter bears no date, but it was evidently written on 27th February.

use of the troops, for this measure would be dangerous alike to public tranquillity and to us. We recommend ourselves to you for the choice of other means. I beg your pardon a hundred times for all the worry and bother we are giving you. I embrace you, my dear nephew, with all my heart.

“MARIE ADÉLAÏDE.

“ARNAY-LE-DUC, 28th February 1791.

\*At the same time Count Louis sent a courier to Dijon, informing the Directory of the resistance made by the Commune of Arnay-le-Duc. Then he drew up an account of these events intending to send one copy to Louis XVI. and the other to the National Assembly.<sup>1</sup>

On 28th February, at seven o'clock at night, the Directory of the department received a letter from Narbonne. Two of its members were immediately sent to Arnay-le-Duc to ensure by “all possible means” the execution of the decree of 24th inst.

For this purpose they were authorised to put all forces into requisition and to accompany Mesdames to the boundary of the department, should they deem it

<sup>1</sup> This account was accompanied by the following letter written by Madame Adélaïde :—

“MY DEAR NEPHEW,—“I am sending you all particulars concerning the trouble we have gone through since our arrival here. The reason for which the Commune of Arnay-le-Duc is opposed to our being set free is, that there is no special order from you although the Assembly referred the matter to you. We are well aware that, in an ordinary state of affairs, you would have simply expressed your wish and it (special order) would be unnecessary; but you must not let them have this pretext, so we beseech you to send us the order with your signature and that of your minister. This very simple measure will enable you to avoid all harsh measures, all the drawbacks of which we mentioned to you yesterday. Monsieur de Boisseuil whom I am sending to you, is charged with a letter for the President of the Assembly and with particulars concerning all that has taken place since we are here, and which he is to make use of, if you think fit. We have charged him to take your orders on this subject. . . .

“MARIE ADÉLAÏDE.”

desirable. The delegates reached Arnay-le-Duc at four o'clock in the morning, and called together the members of the district and the municipal officials. The heads of the department of the district and of the municipality all agreed that the law must be enforced. As we have already seen, the municipal authorities were weak and easily intimidated ; they therefore requested and obtained the assistance of the most notable inhabitants of the Commune in order to strengthen them in this decision. As was to be the case later on at Varennes, the National Guards had hastened from the neighbouring villages. Some had even come from Dijon, Beaune, Autun and from Semur. Gathered together in the town hall, all the officers of these detachments loudly proclaimed their resolution to obey the law and to comply with any requisitions that might be made to them. In face of this display of good intentions, the delegates of the Directory thought themselves sure of success. They had been to give this assurance to Mesdames when, on their return to the town hall they were assailed by a multitude of National Guards who hung on to them and refused to let them go until they had extorted the promise that Mesdames should not go. In vain the delegates tried to pacify them by obtaining from the Princesses the promise that they would take the road to Dijon.<sup>1</sup> The tocsin sounded, the alarm-beat echoed through the streets and the inhabitants invaded the town hall, demanding imperiously that Mesdames should remain at Arnay until an answer should come from Paris. The helpless delegates were obliged to give way and, once more, Mesdames had to resign themselves and wait. In the evening of the same day (1st March), taking advantage of a messenger whom Narbonne was despatching to the Court, the delegates joined to his letters a report addressed to the

<sup>1</sup> This meant turning their backs on their destination, for Dijon was to the north of Arnay, whereas their course lay towards the south-east, passing by Ivry, Chagny, Châlon-sur-Saône, Tournus and Macon.

National Assembly, giving an account of the insubordination of the inhabitants of Arnay-le-Duc; then they followed the example of the Princesses and waited coming events.<sup>1</sup>

When the King was informed that the inhabitants of Arnay still obstinately refused to let his aunts proceed, he could only order the department to overcome their resistance. The Directory gave new instructions. In case of any delay, with the help of the National Guards, the delegates were to undertake themselves to remove all obstacles; but, as we have already seen, this meant marking time without advancing. In the National Assembly, Guniot, Deputy of Semur, excused the people of Arnay by saying that as the decree of 24th February was not accompanied by an express order from the King, signed by his ministers, they had thought it a prudent and patriotic course to send a deputation to the sovereign and thus ascertain his wishes. As the deputation had at length been informed, orders had been sent immediately to Arnay, and Guiot assured that the Commune would now show as much eagerness in facilitating Mesdames' journey as they had hitherto shown zeal in detaining them. In reality, the strong hand of law prevailed at length. However, it seems doubtful that this result was brought about by the injunctions of the public authorities. It is much more likely that it was due to the fact that the ringleaders were growing weary of the struggle. No doubt also, the money which Narbonne is said to have distributed, helped to bring the matter to a close. On 3rd March, after eleven days of captivity, Mesdames resumed their journey. They hastened to the frontier, without even stopping at Lyons, in spite of the sympathy shown them in this city. As

<sup>1</sup> One of the two delegates who signed this report was the chemist, Guyton de Morveau. After having been Attorney-General to the Parliament of Dijon, he was then Attorney-General for the Department. In the autumn of the following year he entered the Convention, and was one of those who voted the death of Louis XVI.

they crossed the Bridge of Beauvoisin, derisive cries arose from the French bank whilst a salute of honour welcomed them on the Savoyard shore.<sup>1</sup>

Having left Bellevue hurriedly during the night, Mesdames had not encountered any serious difficulty at the beginning of their journey, but they had started without luggage and the vans remained in the courtyards.<sup>2</sup> They had barely reached the first turn on the road when a band of men and women arrived from Paris and suddenly appeared near the castle. When they learnt that the Princesses had fled, they vented their fury on their belongings. If the birds had flown, the nest at least was well worth capturing. It will be remembered that a rumour had been spread abroad that Mesdames were to carry away millions concealed in their luggage. The rioters therefore set about plundering the coaches and setting fire to the mansion. However, in the dead of night, the door-keeper was able to warn the authorities of Sèvres and Meudon, who hastened up to Bellevue, after despatching a mounted policeman to Versailles where Alexandre Berthier was in command of the National Guards of the department. When Berthier arrived at Bellevue, he found the Sèvres and Meudon troops fraternising with the Parisian bands. They shared the same terrors—real or feigned—that maddened the rioters, and, delirious with wine and spirits, not only refused to obey their chief, but

<sup>1</sup> *Nat. Arch.*, C. 58, 64, 221; BB<sup>30</sup>, 253. *Archives of dep. of Isère*, L. 105. *Arch. of Seine-et-Oise*, L. 1 m. *Moniteur*, 3rd Feb.; 3rd March, 1791. Camille Desmoulins, *Révolutions de France et de Brabant*, No. 64. Marat, *L'ami du peuple*, No. 371. *Journal de Gouverneur Morris*, 1st Feb. 1791. *Correspondance entre le Comte de Mirabeau et le Comte de la Marche*, vol. iii. pp. 64-65 (published by M. de Lescure), vol. ii. pp. 505-509; *Memoires du Marquis de Ferrières*, vol. ii. ch. ix. Ed. de Barthélemy, *Mesdames de France*, ch. xii. Comte de Chastellux, *Relation du voyage de Mesdames*, pp. 9-11.

<sup>2</sup> They had started in such haste that they had not even time to take any linen with them. At Arnay they were obliged to have their chemises washed overnight.

prevented him from entering the gates that led to the castle. This revolt which is but one incidence of what had become of military discipline throughout the whole kingdom, lasted for several days and nights, amidst scenes of violence, threats, negotiations and incidents of all kinds. However, by dint of patience and coolness, Berthier at length succeeded on 5th March, in extricating Mesdames' coaches, which he escorted with his troops to the high road running from Paris to Lyons, and, being clear of the excited atmosphere of Bellevue, he met with no more serious difficulties.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Arch. of Seine-et-Oise*, L. 38, 39. (Deliberation of the Directory of the department); *Ibid.*, L. m. (account sent by Berthier to the municipality of Versailles). One portion of Mesdames' luggage was conveyed to Marseilles by a certain Portrait, who belonged to Madame Adélaïde's household. A letter written by Alliot de Mussey to this Princess (27th May 1791) informs us that Portrait had forgotten an object that no woman or man, no princess or oyster-woman of the eighteenth century could do without—he had failed to forward a certain snuff-box. Four months later, as he was about to step into his coach and start for the land of exile, the Count de Provence suddenly remembered that he had forgotten a . . . second snuff-box! If d'Avaray had not prevented him, he would have gone back to fetch it!

## CHAPTER X

### FIRST YEARS IN EXILE

MESDAMES met with a princely welcome in every place where they stopped in the States of the King of Sardinia. They spent three days at Chambéry. Madame Victoire wept unceasingly. Madame Adélaïde had almost lost the power to speak. After having crossed the Alps at the Mont Cenis, in the drifting snow, they rested for a fortnight at Turin where the King came in person and paid them the greatest honours. They then moved on to Parma, a town that interested them much, for it was full of the memory of Madame Infanta, the sister they had loved so dearly. Madame de Narbonne could not look indifferently on this city either, for she had spent the first ten years of her married life within its walls, had given birth to her two children, and had known there, no doubt, many joys, and perhaps still more sorrows. . . . The Count d'Artois met his aunts at Parma and conducted them to Bologna where they waited until their dwelling in the Eternal City was ready to receive them.<sup>1</sup> As Mesdames of France had not at first intended to go to Rome, Cardinal de Bernis, the King's ambassador to the Pope, had not been informed officially of their journey, and naturally he had no idea that the Princesses wished to dwell in his palace. On 9th March he wrote to M. de Montmorin, Minister of Foreign Affairs :

<sup>1</sup> Ed. de Barthélemy *Mesdames de France*, ch. xii. Count de Chastellux, *Voyage de Mesdames*, pp. 11-12.



"Yesterday, by letters sent from Paris on 21st and 22nd February, we heard of the hasty departure of Mesdames de France for Rome. Everybody is as much surprised at the courage shown by these august Princesses as at the licentiousness of the populace of the capital. My friends<sup>1</sup> assure me that Mesdames intend to stop at my house with their suite. Until now, I had not believed in this journey of which I had not been informed in the usual way. Consequently, I shall have but very little time to get my house ready to receive such illustrious travellers. I have not even a list of the persons who are accompanying them nor any idea of the number of attendants they are bringing with them for their service. The Roman palaces are all laid out in long suites of rooms, having neither private entrances nor staircases; everything is arranged for display and nothing for comfort or convenience. At the present moment there is not one mansion to let where Mesdames could alight. Even the inns, which would be unsuitable for them, are full of travellers. The coming visit of their Royal Highnesses the King and Queen of Sicily increases present difficulties, so that my house is the one shelter that can suit Mesdames. Nevertheless this house, which will cease to be mine as soon as they arrive, is not large enough, and I have hired twenty rooms in a palace opposite mine and these must be furnished in all haste and made habitable. The expense and the embarrassment which this unexpected arrival brings on me is in proportion to the honour and satisfaction of receiving the august daughters of my former master, my benefactor, and the worthy aunts of my sovereign. You know better than anyone else

<sup>1</sup> Amongst these friends we must, no doubt, count the Duchess de Narbonne, who had known Bernis for a long time. It is hardly probable that Mesdames with their numerous attendants should have fallen upon the Cardinal without having warned him themselves as the government had failed to do so.

in what circumstances I am placed,<sup>1</sup> and you will easily understand that I have but few resources wherewith to face such a reception. On 2nd of this month Turin had not any news of Mesdames, and much anxiety was felt on their account. However, it is thought that at Macon, they took the road to Geneva. The mountains in Savoy are covered with snow. Let us hope that after filling these Princesses with such great courage, Providence will watch over their safety. Great God! what a lesson it is for the lords of the world!"

On 15th March, when she had already reached Turin, Madame, replying to a letter from Bernis, at length informed him herself that she intended to seek shelter within his palace. "I am very sorry, *Monsieur le Cardinal*, that you should have forestalled me in writing; but I did not dare to inform you of our intention of going to Rome. *Since we are free again we do not dare either to write, to speak or even to think. Thank God! we have found slavery again,* and, for this reason, I must say how glad I shall be to see your Grace. With the greatest pleasure I accept your proposal that we should dwell under your roof. I intended asking you myself, but I beg you that it may only be under the condition that we are no burden to you! . . . <sup>2</sup>

A few days later the Cardinal's arrangements are almost complete. He takes his pen once more and writes to Montmorin: ". . . Mesdames, the King's Aunts, must have arrived at Turin on 13th. I shall retire to a little corner in my house and give up the rest to them, however, this will not suffice for their suite and (at great expense) I am preparing lodgings for them in the house

<sup>1</sup> Bernis here refers, no doubt, to the Civil Constitution of the Clergy, the consequences of which, as we shall see, were particularly disastrous to him.

<sup>2</sup> Stryenski, *Mesdames de France*, p. 204.

opposite to my mansion. I will go to meet Mesdames at two stages from here."

In the meantime, as Bernis had refused to take the Constitutional oath without restriction, he received his letters of recall. As Archbishop of Albi and Titular of three rich abbeys, he enjoyed great benefices and, these having been suppressed by the Civil Constitution of the clergy, he soon found himself driven to the last extremity. On 30th March he wrote to the Minister, his former chief, saying: "It will seem strange and almost incredible that I should appear absolutely stripped of everything just at the moment when Mesdames of France, the King's aunts, are to arrive at my house, and before the eyes of the Sicilian Sovereigns who are expected here for Holy Week. I shall be quite destitute, having spent the little money I possessed in endeavouring to prepare a becoming reception for the gracious Princesses who have been forced, by the misfortunes of France and their religion, to seek a refuge in Rome."<sup>1</sup>

In spite of the misfortunes that befell him, the aged Cardinal—he was then seventy-six years old—was too much of a philosopher and too true a nobleman not to turn a good face on the matter. He entrusted his duties as ambassador to a temporary successor, and continued to survey the preparations required by the arrival of the daughters of Louis XV., just as though no change had taken place in his circumstances.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Bernis ruined himself by refusing to take the Constitutional oath; but he received, in compensation, a pension of one thousand écus (3000 francs) a month, bestowed on him by the Spanish government. However, as Spain did not pay regularly, the Pope and Mesdames provided for the last days of the former ambassador of France.

<sup>2</sup> As was the case with Madame de Narbonne and many others, Cardinal de Bernis's ruin was inevitable and merely hastened on by the fall of the old Régime. The loss of his ecclesiastical benefices and of his post as ambassador almost reduced him to beggary, it is true, but his display of pomp, the sumptuous receptions which he gave constantly, and the progressive decrease of his income in France, had brought him

When Mesdames reached Terni, in the Papal Estates, they found a courier whom the Cardinal had dispatched to meet them. Bernis himself travelled three stages from Rome in order to greet them. "The first moment choked my voice and moved me to tears," wrote he, and this must have been the truth, for this "*fromage mol*" (soft cheese) as his friend the Marquis de Mirabeau called him—loved Mesdames sincerely, and they returned his affection. They remembered that he had been the former confidant of their sister, Madame Infanta; an old and faithful servant to the late King, their father, and that

into great straits at a very early stage; these difficulties were not generally known, but he did not conceal them from his intimate friends; he was a great friend of the three brothers Joly de Fleury, and on 7th January 1783 he wrote to one of them. . . . "Monsieur le Duc de Chartres has been staying with me for three weeks, and he will come again on his return from Naples. I wrote to him offering him on the Pope's behalf, the greatest honours. He preferred to preserve the strictest incognito, this, however, did not prevent him from enjoying all the consideration due to his rank and his birth. I deserve some credit for having managed this as the ceremonies are only regulated concerning the reception of Sovereigns and the sons of Kings. I have been promised assistance that will not cost the King anything, and without which it would be absolutely impossible for me to meet the extraordinary expenses required by the constant visits of great people of this rank. The farmers pay badly and prices have risen to excess. Exchange is horribly dear; paper money alone is used in Rome, and it costs five per cent. to change a note of hand into money." Six weeks later his grievances are the same. "Misery is great in my diocese of Albi, and, by proscribing the tithe on corn, the Parliament of Toulouse has deprived me of an income of thirty to forty thousand livres. The Archbishop of Toulouse has been magnificently indemnified. Why should I only be excluded when I am put to such expense by labouring constantly for the clergy! During Lent, for the second time, we shall receive the Archduke Maximilian and very probably the Emperor also. The journey of Monsieur, the King's brother, is spoken of for next autumn. Peace will remove all obstacles, and Rome will be full of strangers. How am I to meet this invasion? If the justice of my cause does not plead for me, I shall be undone, for I cannot have recourse to intrigues. *All this is for the three brothers.*" *Biblio. Nat.* Joly de Fleury, No. 2485, folio 79.

he had known them in their youthful days. He honoured them as Princesses who had always shown him benevolent confidence, and with whom he had been on the best of terms for over thirty years. He had seen them on the pinnacle of glory from which the Revolution had plunged them into an abyss of abject misery.

On seeing Madame de Chastellux, he remembered that he had been the intimate friend of her mother, Madame de Durfort, whom he addressed in his letters as "My sister," whilst she called him "My brother." Finally, the Count de Bernis, a relation of the Cardinal's, had married a Narbonne-Pelet, a cousin of the Duchess de Narbonne-Lara, and if this circumstance had not sufficed to draw together the aged Prelate and Madame Adélaïde's lady-in-waiting, in order to feel the strong ties that united them, they had only to recall the days when they both were attached to Madame Infanta.

Mesdames entered Rome on Saturday 16th April 1791, at three o'clock in the afternoon. Four days later, Bernis's temporary successor sent the following interesting account to the Minister: "Mesdames, the King's aunts arrived here in perfect health. . . . His Eminence, Cardinal de Bernis, accompanied by M. d'Azara, the Spanish minister, went to meet them at three stages from Rome. They proceeded to the palace of the Cardinal, who had gone a little before them and received them at the foot of the staircase. The Pope immediately sent his chamberlain, the Prelate Pignatelli, to compliment them. The next moment His Eminence the Cardinal de Zelada, Secretary of State to His Holiness, came to pay his respects, and then, in turn, the most important people—the cardinals, ambassadors, foreign ministers, principal prelates, great noblemen and great ladies,—sent their first gentleman-in-waiting or came themselves to the door, to show their respect and devotedness towards these august Princesses. On Sunday evening

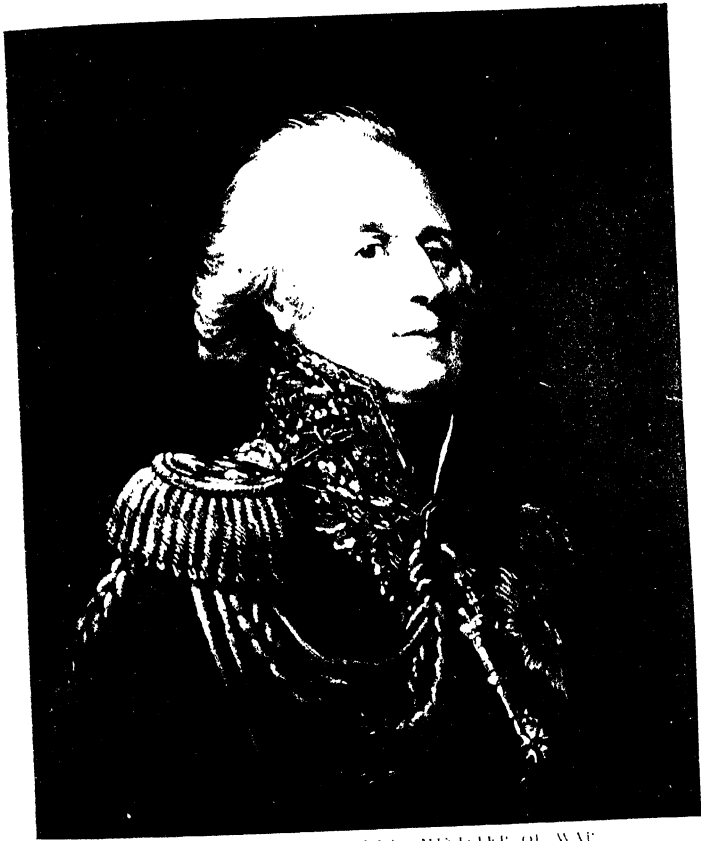
they went and paid a visit to the Pope ; they were escorted by the Princess Santa-Croce, Spanish grandee, whom the Holy Father has appointed to accompany them everywhere. His Holiness received them with open arms, in the most touching manner. Their conversation with Pius VI. lasted for a long half-hour, and they withdrew unwillingly, but extremely satisfied with the reception they had met with. Day before yesterday, in the afternoon, the Pope paid a visit to Mesdames (this is said to be an unexampled occurrence) and it lasted as long as theirs. In the morning the Pope had sent to Mesdames, with great state, the present which it is customary to give to princesses of the highest rank. The Governor of Rome and the Treasurer-General of the Apostolic See, had also sent theirs. It is the rule for them to act in this way in such circumstances. These presents consist in various choice eatables, foreign wines and liqueurs. In the evening Mesdames condescended to respond to the enthusiasm shown by the French men and women who are in Rome at present, and received their homage with the graciousness peculiar to them. In the same manner they received a great number of Roman lords and ladies who came to offer their respects. I must not forget to say that, on the day of Mesdames' arrival, everybody was out to meet them, the number of coaches and the affluence of people within the town and without was so great that their carriage could only proceed slowly. As soon as Mesdames entered the Pontifical States they were received with every mark of respect and attention by the governors and principal officials of the different towns through which they passed.<sup>1</sup> This morning Mesdames, the King's aunts, received

<sup>1</sup> The Cardinal, Secretary of State, had issued instructions on this subject. The minutes of these orders are still to be seen in the Archives at the Vatican. M. Bourgin has summarised them in his work entitled : *La France et Rome, de 1788 à 1797*. Pp. 6 and 7.

power. His taste, his abilities, and his connections, all these circumstances made him suitable to undertake guidance of the Foreign Office, and this was the post that he coveted. His *liaison* with Madame de Staël, the wife of a foreign minister, prevented him from being appointed to this department, and he was obliged to content himself with the War Office.<sup>1</sup> I believe that historians generally agree in their appreciation of Narbonne's ministry. He entered upon his duties with a program that was most worthy of approbation, but which no longer met the exigencies of the day. He made proof of intelligence and dexterity, but he also placed his confidence too rashly in the authority of the deliberative Assemblies and in the virtue of the people, co-operating with the sovereignty of the nation. He displayed unceasing activity and patriotism in taking, with promptitude and decision, the necessary measures to drive back the invasion, but his stay in the Ministry was so short that he was unable to do more than indicate a line of defence.<sup>2</sup> Historians judge these matters very

<sup>1</sup> *Journal du Gouverneur Morris*, p. 283. We find the following judgment on Narbonne in a "note handed to the King concerning different persons whom he might call to the government." It is an anonymous note and bears no date, but it belongs certainly to this period and may have been written by Montmorin or Lessart: "He has great wit, great pliancy, he is a man fertile in resources. He speaks with great ease. During the Revolution his conduct was straightforward and honourable. The ministers who have dealt with him have always been well satisfied. Besides, the King knows M. de Narbonne better than anyone else, and, in this respect, the ministers can but offer to the King an opinion which he alone can be judge." (*Arch. Nat.*, C. 221.)

<sup>2</sup> Being a partisan of war, and knowing it to be inevitable, the Count de Narbonne gave himself a double task. His idea was to restore confidence to the army, which had become disorganised by the emigration of the officers and the insubordination of the soldiers, and, further, to put into a state of defence the fortresses in the north and east of the country. With this aim in view he made several tours of inspection along the frontier. These visits were much talked of at the time and, on his return, he wrote the following letter to the King. It is a pleasure to reproduce it for it is an excellent specimen of Narbonne's character.



COUNT LOUIS DE NARBONNE, MINISTER OF WAR  
*From a contemporary portrait*





differently from the members of the emigration. They could understand that such men as Dumouriez, Brissot, or Isnard should serve the Revolution; they were plebians and were merely following their own course. But the émigrés could not forgive such treason on the part of a Talleyrand, a Mirabeau, a Lafayette, a Biron. They were noblemen, and they were behaving like officers who fire on their own soldiers. Considering that Madame Adélaïde was her son's benefactress and his godmother, the Duchess de Narbonne must have suffered doubly at seeing him foremost amongst the deserters. His treason was deepened by ingratitude. It was in vain that he refused, as long as the King has not taken the Constitutional Oath, to accept the rank of Field-Marshal which the National Assembly had conferred on him.<sup>1</sup>

He was himself a perfect nobleman, and he always spoke as such even to the soldiers whom he considered his equals. "Sire, I dare to promise Your Majesty the success of the journey you deigned to command me to undertake. The King's name makes such an impression on the army that it would be wrong not to count on its fidelity and obedience. The garrisons of Cambrai, Douai, Lille and Valenciennes really astonished me and, in this alone M. de Rochambeau would have deserved the favour your Majesty wishes to bestow on him (doubtless his Marshals staff). Some distrust towards the officers being still felt, I think I have found the means—if they exist—of making it disappear. After having declared most positively the unshaken will of the King, I announced to them that he deigned to answer himself for their sentiments. They nearly all accepted with gratitude. At least none of them refused to submit to a measure which binds them more surely than all the oaths in the world. Your Majesty knows that at all times and in all circumstances, France owes to the army her security, her glory, and her liberty.—I am, . . . respectfully . . . LOUIS DE NARBONNE." (*Arch. Nat.*, C. 221.) Lieut.-Colonel L. Hartmann, *Officiers de l'Armée royale et la Révolution*," pp. 404 and 55.

<sup>1</sup> When the Minister of War sent to Louis de Narbonne his commission as Field-Marshal, the Count thanked him, on 9th August 1791, by a very noble letter of which the following is the most important part. . . . "It is my duty to justify by the most scrupulous straightforwardness the confidence that has been shown me at such an interesting moment. I am perhaps more worthy to bear the title of friend of

In the eyes of the *émigrés* what were the Constitution, the Assembly, the King—especially the King, except mere shadows beside the Jacobin Club, the centre of the one existing authority? Besides when, following Narbonne's proposal, Luckner and Rochambeau were raised to the dignity of Field-Marshal, had not the staffs that were sent to them been, previously, despoiled of their fleurs-de-lis? By giving such an impetus to the preparations for war, was not this son of an *émigrée*, this man who had protected Mesdames of France on their flight towards exile, really furbishing up arms against the *émigrés* themselves—that is to say against France—the only true France, that which was now gathered together beyond the frontier? Such sophisms as these succeeded in raising the liveliest indignation in the circle

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Liberty and the Constitution than many of those who must now reproach themselves with having raised up enemies to the country, through their blind exaggeration, and I know well all that the fatherland has a right to expect from me. But I am also aware that I should be unworthy to serve her if, in my very particular position, I could, with base ingratitude, forget the respect and gratitude that bind me to the King and to his family. The Constitutional Charter is about to be laid before him. If he accepts, I am sure you will but praise the delicacy of feeling that prompts me to desire to hold from him the right to die for the liberty and welfare of my country. In the event of his refusing the Charter, I must not conceal from you that, however painful and humiliating the sacrifice may appear, I shall consider myself inevitably condemned to throw up my commission. I trust that my sentiments, that are well-known, and my conduct since the beginning of the Revolution, will preserve me from the suspicion of being capable of abetting, directly or indirectly, the criminal and vain designs made against liberty. I shall await your answer with my regiment where my presence may be useful, and appears, at least, to be agreeable to all. It is a pleasure for me to be able to answer to you for the unanimous feelings of all my men." The minister insisted, but on 21st August Narbonne replied once more: "Having constantly to choose between my duty towards my country as a Frenchman and what I owe to my King as a man overwhelmed with his favours, and in order to escape from the crime and misfortune of sinning against one or the other, I am still unshaken in my decision to send in my resignation if the King rejects the Constitutional Charter."

gathered around Mesdames at Rome. The Chastellux coterie, sharing Madame de Durfort's ill-will towards Madame de Narbonne, made the latter pay bitterly for her son's failings. On hearing that Count Louis had been called to the War Office, Bernis himself wrote thus to the French Minister residing in Parma: "We shall soon see whether a man who drinks champagne, brings dishonour on women and makes debts, is fit to take the place of Monsieur de Louvois."<sup>1</sup> On 10th March 1792, by one of those laconic and insulting notes, by means of which the Kings of France were in the habit of dismissing their Ministers, Louis XVI. informed this successor of Louvois that his post in the War Office was to be given to another. Instead of taking a passport and joining his family in Rome,—as so many other malcontents would have done, in like circumstances, and as his mother, no doubt, ardently hoped he would,—Count de Narbonne, acting as a true soldier, but as an unfeeling son, started immediately for the army of the Centre and from there hastened to the Army of the North, which was commanded by his friend Lafayette.<sup>2</sup> He thus gave a striking example of that discipline which he had endeavoured to restore in the troops during his short administration of the War Office.<sup>3</sup>

It is true that on 22nd May, Madame de Narbonne's secretary wrote to his mistress, saying: "I know positively that Count Louis acknowledges that he has failed towards Madame; one word from her would call

<sup>1</sup> Stryiński, *Mesdames de France, daughters of Louis XV.*, p. 216; *Mémoires de Mme. de Boignes*, vol. i. p. 105; Torneron, *l'histoire générale des Émigrés* (3rd edition) vol. i. p. 213.

<sup>2</sup> Narbonne had asked for a Marshal's staff for Lafayette, but the King had rejected his request. Being displeased at the dismissal of the Minister of War, the National Assembly named Narbonne Lieutenant-General on 22nd May 1792. The latter, however, true to himself, was wise enough not to accept this honour.

<sup>3</sup> Letter written by Narbonne to the First Consul, quoted in *Mémoires du Comte de Rambuteau*, pp. 34-39.

him back and throw him at her feet, but it would have to be done promptly."<sup>1</sup> In writing these lines, the worthy Lalleman seems to have expressed his own wishes rather than those of Count Louis. At this particular moment, Narbonne was solely engrossed in trying to find the means of rousing the King from the sterile inertness by which he was ruining himself in the Tuileries, and to save him and the monarchy by attempting a new, and better planned Varennes.<sup>2</sup> Whether, as it has been said, Louis XVI. secretly recalled Narbonne, or that the latter came spontaneously to submit his proposals, one thing is certain, the Count was in Paris on 10th August when the Monarchy fell and its last defenders were scattered away.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Arch. Nat.*, vol. T. 568.

<sup>2</sup> "In concert with Count Louis de Narbonne, Minister of War towards the end of 1791—one of the wittiest and most distinguished men I have ever known—Madame de Staël had conceived an infallible plan of escape for Louis XVI. and his family. It was said, that petty ministerial jealousy dared to conceal this project from the unfortunate monarch. I have heard them both deplore most bitterly the failure of this attempt for, had the King been saved, the Terror would have been smothered from the very beginning" (*Mémorial de Norvins*, vol. ii. p. 81). Madame de Staël's plan was to purchase an estate that was for sale in the neighbourhood of Dieppe and to conduct there, under disguise, the King, the Queen and the Dauphin. Malouet, who was to submit this scheme to the King, did not even obtain admittance into the Royal presence (*Mémoires de Malouet*, vol. ii. pp. 221-223).

<sup>3</sup> "I had only been back in Paris for three days and had been occupied warning the King of the danger, when on the 10th August the riot broke out" (Letter written by Narbonne to the First Consul. Quoted in *Rambuteau's Memoirs*, *op. cit.*, pp. 34-39; Villemain, *op. cit.*, p. 40). During the interval that elapsed between his dismissal and the 10th August, Narbonne was often incognito, in Paris. On 10th July, Lalleman writes to the Duchess. "I hear that Count Louis has been in Paris for the last two days. I do not know why."

On 31st July, he sends the following reply to the Chevalier de Marange, an officer attached to the princesses, who had questioned him concerning the journey, in the name of Mme. Adélaïde and the Duchess de Narbonne. "I would have answered more promptly the letter with which you honoured me, if I had not been detained by the hope of acquiring ampler and surer information concerning the person you inquire after.

We may picture to ourselves the anguish endured by the Duchess as she learnt, by degrees, the events that were then taking place in France. On 28th August,<sup>1</sup> he had been arraigned. Had he been arrested? Had he fallen beneath the axe of the Septembrists or had he managed to escape and flee beyond the frontier? Would this last trial have at length opened his eyes? If he were safe, would he not appear one morning, in Rome, and, after retracting his errors, resolve to remain henceforth at the post assigned to him by duty, affection and honour, beside Madame Adélaïde, his mother, his wife and his children? We do not know when Madame de Narbonne was informed of her son's fate. What she learnt gave her but little satisfaction. On 9th August, the Constitutionalists who were devoted to the King, men such as Lally-Tollendal, Narbonne, La Tour du Pin, Castellane,<sup>2</sup>

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But, up till now all is secret, and I can only make conjectures. As you already know, *Monsieur*, he has been in Paris for nearly a month, he appears to be perfectly easy and there is no talk about him. Many circumstances make me believe that he means to stay here, but others—and they are more numerous—incline me to thinking that he will travel and that, if he has his choice and can follow his own inclinations, he will go to a country where he has already dwelt and which according to his own confession, he was wrong in leaving. I think, *Monsieur*, that if you could contribute to his being recalled there, you would be rendering him the greatest service. Otherwise, what will become of him? He has no income. He has laden himself with heavy annual expenses, without speaking of his private debts that have not yet been paid, the amount of which I do not know."

<sup>1</sup> As Narbonne had fled, the decree was published and pasted up all over France. Amongst his papers in the administrative Archives of the War Office, there is one copy printed on a loose leaf.

<sup>2</sup> The Marquis de Castellane had been a member of the Constitutional Assembly. He was Major-General. He was very intimate with Count Louis de Narbonne and, as was the custom amongst the young nobles of the Liberal party they used "thee and thou" when speaking to each other. Under the Empire, he became Prefect of the Basses-Pyrénées. His son, the future Marshal of France was aide-de-camp to Narbonne during the Russian campaign, and he has left us precious details concerning the Count.

Montmorency, had sought, in vain, for permission to enter the Tuileries and join his defenders. The insurmountable distrust of the courtiers kept them at a distance, and, on the next day, they roamed around the palace, exposed to every peril. Their position became more critical during the following days, when Paris was alarmed by the news that the Prussian and Austrian troops had entered France. On all sides, it was rumoured that all honest people would be massacred if the foreigners advanced. The prisons were full. In these circumstances, Madame de Staël made good use of the immunity enjoyed by her husband, the Swedish Ambassador, and showed great courage and presence of mind in endeavouring to save her friends. Amongst others, Narbonne was most certainly saved from death by her efforts.

“Several of my friends,” she relates, “Messieurs de Narbonne, Montmorency, and Beaumetz were personally threatened, and they were each hidden in the house of some citizen. But they had to change their abode every day, because those that sheltered them became afraid. At first, they would not make use of my house, because they thought it would attract attention. On the other hand it appeared to me that although Monsieur de Staël was away, my dwelling would be respected, considering it belonged to an Ambassador and that above the door was marked *Hôtel de Suède* (Swedish Embassy). Finally there was no room for demurring when no one could be found daring enough to receive the proscribed persons. Two of them came to me. The secret was only confided to one of my people, whom I could trust. I locked my friends up in the most secluded room, and spent the night in the apartment looking out on the street, fearing at every moment the so-called domiciliary visits. One morning, one of my servants whom I distrusted, came and told me that the description and denunciation

of Monsieur de Narbonne had been pasted up at the corner of my street. He was then hidden in my house. I thought this man had frightened me in order to discover my secret, but he was merely relating the fact, quite simply. A short time afterwards, the dreaded domiciliary visit took place in my house. Monsieur de Narbonne being outlawed, would have perished the same day, had he been discovered, and, in spite of the precautions I had taken, I knew that he could not escape if the researches were properly made. It was therefore necessary to prevent this investigation at any cost. I summoned up all my strength, and in this circumstance, I felt, that one can overcome one's emotion, no matter how violent it may be, if one knows that it endangers the life of another. In order to seize the proscribed men, commissaries of the most inferior class had been sent into all the Paris houses, and to prevent anyone from escaping whilst they made their visit, the ends of the street were guarded by military posts. I began by doing my utmost to alarm these men concerning the violation of the law of nations, crime of which they were making themselves guilty by visiting an Ambassador's house. As they did not know much about geography, I persuaded them into believing that Sweden was a power that could threaten them with an immediate attack, as it lay along the French frontier. . . . People of the lower classes are won at once or never. . . . I noticed that my arguments had made some impression on them, and, although my heart was full of mortal fear, I had the courage to joke with them about their unjust suspicions. Nothing could be more pleasing to men of this class, for, in the excess of their hatred of noblemen, they are well satisfied to be treated by them as equals. I conducted them thus to the door, thanking God for the extraordinary strength he had bestowed on me in such a moment. Nevertheless, this state of things could not be prolonged, the slightest accident would



suffice to ruin the proscribed man who was so well known on account of his late Ministry. Dr Bollmann, a generous and witty Hanoverian who later on exposed himself in delivering Monsieur de Lafayette from the Austrian prisons, heard of my anxiety, and, prompted by no other motive save the enthusiasm of a noble heart, he volunteered to succeed in conducting Monsieur de Narbonne to England by giving him a friend's passport. Nothing could be more daring than this scheme, for if a foreigner—no matter who he might be—were discovered helping a proscribed man to escape under a false name, he would have been condemned to death. Dr Bollmann's courage and will never failed in the execution of his plan, and four days after his departure, Monsieur de Narbonne was in London."<sup>1</sup>

This Bollmann was a young German of twenty-four years of age, whose enthusiasm had been fired by Schiller and Rousseau. The events that took place in France made his heart beat high, but when he reached the country in 1790, and examined things more closely, he soon lost his illusions. Nevertheless, he clung to his passionate worship of liberty, and felt great admiration for its last obstinate defenders. Amongst the latter, he counted Narbonne whom he had met at the Swedish Embassy. "Narbonne—says he—is rather tall, strong and stout in build, but there is something attractive, noble, and superior about him. His wit and the wealth of his ideas are inexhaustible. He is full of every social virtue. He inspires courage in the most despondent. He never ceases to charm and, when he chooses, he can fascinate one individual or a whole society alike."<sup>2</sup> This young and enthusiastic man has also related how he managed to cover the flight of Madame de Staël's friend. His account, which was written the day after the event,

<sup>1</sup> *Considérations sur la Révolution française*, part. iii. ch. x.

<sup>2</sup> Lady Blennerhassett, *Mme. de Staël*, vol. ii. p. 147.

adds so many details to the Ambassador's story that it deserves also to be reproduced word for word. On 14th September 1792, Bollmann wrote to an aunt living in Carlsruhe. "Moreover, you will not find it unnatural that a sufficient appearance of business was found to reconcile Narbonne's duty to his inclination, and to make him forsake the army to come to Paris to see his friend. When you also remember that the Jacobins are the deadly enemies of Lafayette, of Narbonne and of all their trusty adherents, and that this horde of evildoers had attained the most unlimited power since the 10th of August, and when I further tell you that Narbonne who was known to be in Paris, was the first on the list of victims whose blood was required to satisfy their thirst for slaughter, you will almost be able to realise the distress in which I found Madame de Staël when I entered her chamber, on the morning of the 14th August. Narbonne was with her—I was soon considered to be the only means of saving him. A quantity of motives ran riot within me, but Madame de Staël's beauty cannot, fortunately, be reckoned amongst them, for she is ugly. A woman about to be a mother,<sup>1</sup> lamenting over the man she loved was a strong incentive to my imagination. She was in tears, the man in danger of his life, the hope of success in saving him, the prospect of England, the possibility of improving my position, the charm of something unusual,—all these worked together—I soon came to a decision. 'I undertake it,' I said, 'and will bring you my plan.' This was also very soon ready. The only difficulty lay in procuring a second passport. I ran

<sup>1</sup> In the month of September Mme. de Staël gave birth to her second son,—Albert—at Coppet. Later on, in 1817, when the future Marshal de Castellane met the elder brother Auguste de Staël, he made the following remark in his notebook, "Auguste de Staël is witty and is rather handsome. He resembles Count Louis de Narbonne. However, the virtue of the late Mme. de Staël must not be meddled with." *Journal*, vol. i. p. 389.

all over the place for three whole days, to all the English and to all my friends, without result; no one would venture. At length, I thought of my good friend Heisch. We went together to the English Embassy, Heisch had to give himself out as a Hanoverian. We received a passport, it was exchanged for another by Lebrun, Minister of Foreign Affairs, then signed by Pétion, the Mayor of Paris, and all difficulty was at an end. Happily, the name of Heisch, who was obliged to hide himself on the day of our flight, was misspelt upon the passport. . . . Narbonne slept at my house the night before his departure. We had to start at four o'clock next morning. We were obliged to go to the guard-room full of men, before we could leave the city. The name of 'Englishmen' and our boldness blinded their eyes. Remarks upon the opinions of the English with reference to the Revolution distracted their attention. Our passports were at last signed. We proceeded on our way. Various scenes of the same description during our journey. We reached Boulogne in safety, fled across the sea, and reached Dover Harbour at 6 o'clock in the evening of the 20th August. On the third evening we were at our destination in Kensington."<sup>1</sup>

Having been obliged to leave France suddenly and as a proscribed man, the Count de Narbonne had been forced to abandon all sorts of interests, some of which, at least, must have been a source of cruel anxiety to him.

<sup>1</sup> Lady Blennerhasset, *Mme. de Staël and her Times*, vol. ii. pp. 145-147. Narbonne had not a single penny in the world, nevertheless, with the fine heedlessness of ways and means on which the French aristocracy prided itself, he wished to grant an annuity to his deliverer. Bollmann, feeling wounded, grew angry and it was with great difficulty that Mme. de Staël made peace between them. On 28th June 1803, at half-past six in the morning, Bollmann who had been ill for eight days, killed himself by jumping out of the window of the fifth floor of the house where he lived in Paris, rue de la Loi (*Arch. Nat., Fr.* 3831).

Although his aged father was fast sinking,<sup>1</sup> his son did not place him amongst the foremost of his preoccupations, he knew that, for the present, he was living peacefully in the midst of his Gascon countrymen and that he was resolved not to expatriate himself. I do not believe either that the Count, who was attached more closely than ever to Madame de Staël, worried himself beyond measure about his own wife. Under the guidance of the aged Bishop of Evreux,<sup>2</sup> the Countess Louis and her eldest daughter had, in the course of the preceding year, gone to Rome and joined Madame Victoire, to whose service, as we know, she was attached. I wish to speak of their youngest daughter, the little Adélarde, who was born at Bellevue, in the summer of 1790. The young mother had not dared to expose an infant at the breast, to the dangers of a journey on the highroads in such agitated times, she did not want to take her from a nurse who could not, or would not separate herself from her own children, consequently she had been forced to leave her at Bellevue, hoping, like all the *émigrés*, that her absence would not be prolonged beyond a few months at the uttermost. But now France was closed to the fugitives, their property was confiscated, and they themselves were threatened with death, it was impossible for them to communicate with their friends or servants

<sup>1</sup> Extract from a letter written by Dr Dufau (5th of the year 1792, *sic*) who acted as steward to the Narbonnes in Gascony. "Everybody is well in Rome. I often get news from His Grace the Duke who is beginning to break down and is becoming infirm. This is not very astonishing when one is seventy-four years of age" (*Arch. Nat.*, vol. 1089).

<sup>2</sup> After having sought a refuge in Tournai, in 1791, François de Narbonne—Lord Bishop of Evreux, went to Rome at the end of the year. He died there on 12th November 1792, at the age of seventy-two years. He was buried in the Chapel of Blessed Chantal, in the Church of St Louis of the French (*Correspondence of the directors of French Academy in Rome*, vol. xvi. p. 57; Leone Vicchi, *Les Français à Rome pendant la Convention*, p. 93; P. Guillaume, *Inventaire des Arch. des Htes. Alpes*, series G. vol. iii.; Introduction, pp. 24-25).

who had remained in the country. Under these circumstances, what was to be the fate of this child left to the care of strangers, poor and needy people, hirelings whom they could no longer pay? In Rome and in England, this thought might well torture the father, the mother, and the grandmother of the little forsaken one. In the beginning, relations and faithful servants still came and watched by her cradle. The Duke de Narbonne sent his brother-in-law, Monsieur de Montlezun, the former Governor of the citadel of Marseilles. The worthy Lalleman went out to her on the morning of 21st June 1791, feeling glad, no doubt, to have a pretext for leaving Paris on the day when the capital heard of the King's flight. He ascertained that she was well; moreover, she was sleeping soundly. He reassured the nurse, paid her, and even left her money for one month in advance. He returned to her again on Sunday, 16th July. The child had been weaned. She had had chicken-pox, but there was hardly any trace left of it. She ate well, she was strong and could almost walk alone. On 6th January 1792, Lalleman went up to Bellevue again. The little girl was well. Her father had placed her with "Madame Maréchaux"<sup>1</sup> because the nurse and "Madame Dien" were about to be confined. He saw her again on the 22nd of the following June. He writes thus of the child's grandmother. "On Friday I went to Bellevue to see Mademoiselle Adélaïde whom I found in perfect health, very gay and amiable. She will look very much like Madame Louise (her mother). She has already all her pretty ways."<sup>2</sup> This news is the last that Lalleman was able to send to Rome. At the time,

<sup>1</sup> At the date of 21st September 1793, we find the name of the citizen Maréchaux affixed to an order of the Directory of the department Seine-et-Oise. After having been Surveyor of the buildings of Bellevue, he had been appointed chief guardian of the seals that had been placed on the old mansion (*Arch. of Seine-et-Oise*, L. 65).

<sup>2</sup> *Arch. Nat.*, T. 568.

the father was still in France, but with the Army. Two months later he had fled, and Lalleman's correspondence had come to an end. Silence then fell around the child, and before knowing what had become of her, her parents had to wait many a long day in the most cruel uncertainty. Adélaïde de Narbonne's life, during these years, was most romantic, one would think one was reading *Silas Marner*. Her future husband, the Count de Rambuteau tells us that she was first confided to the lodge-keepers of Bellevue, the Maréchaux family (of whom Lalleman has just spoken) but, fearing to compromise themselves by harbouring the child of proscribed parents, they exposed her beneath the porch of the Church. She was then adopted by one of Mesdames' former floor-polishers, who brought her up and treated her as though she had been his own child. With the other village children, she went to school in the Sèvres Manufacture, and later on, the Emperor amused himself with showing to Marie Louise, the field, on the road to Meudon, where Mademoiselle de Narbonne had taken care of her adopted father's cow. This good man was so deeply attached to her that, when her two grandfathers—Monsieur de Narbonne and Monsieur de Montholon—came to reclaim her, although they had repaid the debt of gratitude due to him, they were almost obliged to have recourse to legal measures in order to make him give up the child.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Mémoires du Comte de Rambuteau*, pp. 22, 23. No doubt the Count de Rambuteau ignored the fact that, in 1794, Mme. de Staël, who was then at Coppet, had busied herself with the fate of the child. She had charged a young Swiss, who was working actively in Paris at saving her friends, to discover the little girl and bring news of her. Judging by these lines taken from a letter written on 17th June by Mme. de Staël to the Princess d'Hénin, it would seem that her countryman had accomplished his errand. " . . . You see what pains he has taken with regard to young de Narbonne; from this account you will be able to guess at the rigour of the searches." (Haussonville, *Le Salon de Mme. Necker*, vol. ii. p. 270.) Lady Blennerhasset says also that Madame de Staël " succeeded in saving the second daughter of Narbonne, who had

ten thousand livres. We know that before this legal bankruptcy was sanctioned, Lalleman had succeeded in obtaining the arrears due to his mistress. He was just in time. On 5th June, the Duchess was informed that her Parma pension was suppressed, and, almost at the same time, Alliot de Mussey, cashier to Madame Adélaïde and her lady-in-waiting, was threatened with imprisonment for having provided them with money and fled suddenly to Belgium.<sup>1</sup> With the help of Abbé de Ruallem, treasurer to Mesdames, the Duchess was able to pay the notes due on 1st July, and to reimburse Mussey. This was her last effort. The flight of her cashier made Madame de Narbonne a bankrupt. We shall now see how the Nation undertook to wind up her affairs.

<sup>1</sup> *Arch. Nat.*, T. 568.

## CHAPTER XI

### SALE BY AUCTION

ON the list drawn up in the department of Seine-et-Oise, on 5th September 1793, "*Seventh list of persons considered as émigrés for having failed to comply with the laws concerning residence,*" we find among others the following names:—"Capet (Adélaïde) and Narbonne (*Femme*) having left furniture estimated at fifteen thousand livres in a house called Hôtel de Tingry, situated rue Neuve, Versailles." <sup>1</sup>

Many documents relating to this "*femme Narbonne, la mère, émigrée*" are to be found in the departmental archives of Seine-et-Oise, where they are kept like withered relics in a shrine. The first of these documents is a report drawn up on 18th August 1792 by three officials of the Versailles Municipality. These commissaries state that on the said day, having ordered the door-keeper of the Palace to show them the cellars of Madame Adélaïde's lady-in-waiting, they had put under seal six hundred and ninety-two bottles of wine belonging to the Duchess.<sup>2</sup> Having done this, during the next few days, they betook themselves to the Tingry Mansion and went through the same formality with the furniture and goods they found there. By 1st October 1792, these preliminary measures had been enforced throughout the depart-

<sup>1</sup> *Arch. Nat.*, BB<sup>1</sup>, 67.

<sup>2</sup> *Arch. of Seine-et-Oise*. Series 9. Narbonne documents—report signed by Louis Mercier, Gamain (former locksmith to Louis XVI.) and Lépiciér.



ment wherever the Duchess had any property, and the Versailles authorities were now at liberty to proclaim the sale.<sup>1</sup> However, since the emigration, the furniture of so many noble houses in Versailles, and in the neighbourhood, had been thrown on to the market, that the ministerial officers, to whom were entrusted the sales, were altogether tired out, and so, in spite of their impatience, the creditors were obliged to take a number and wait their turn.<sup>2</sup> It was not until the 25th March 1793, that the clerk of the Versailles Court, accompanied by the district administrator and a municipal officer, went to Madame de Narbonne's hotel and proceeded with the sale. It lasted ten days, at the rate of two sessions a day. Thirty-two objects had been carefully put aside and transferred to the Crown furniture repository, there to await subsequent exchanges, as the experts Langlier, Riesner, Julliot and Lignereux had deemed them "articles of value." Before assisting at the sale, let us cast a glance on these reserved articles. From the description drawn up by the experts, we can feel that they must have looked on them longingly, seeing in them beautiful specimens—soon to be scattered away—of an art that was too delicate for the brutality of the new age. At the same time, we shall be able to enter into Madame de Narbonne's house, and, after imagining

<sup>1</sup> On 1st October 1792, the Assignee for the district having asked the Versailles Municipality for the reports relating to the affixing of the seals on the property of Dame Narbonne, the Municipality replied on the 4th inst. that they were collecting them and they would forward them as soon as possible.

<sup>2</sup> On 28th January 1793, Boivin, a legal man, acting for the creditors of the Narbannes, wrote from Paris to the administrators of the Versailles district, requesting them to hasten on the sale of the goods and furniture contained in the Tingry Hôtel. "The longer this sale is put off, the less the creditors will reap, as the cost of the caretaking of the house increases, and the goods and furniture are damaged by the dampness, especially during the thaw and rain" (*Arch. of Seine-et-Oise*. Series 9. Narbonne documents).

that the rooms are once more adorned with her beautiful furniture, we shall ascertain with what taste this great lady had sought to charm and embellish the interior of her home. This description may possibly allow us to recognise some object of art, now in a public or private collection, and whose origin was hitherto unknown.<sup>1</sup> Under the first number the experts had placed a chest of drawers with rounded corners shaped like a console, the centre panel of which was in old lacquer with Burgos vases, and vases made of agate, the whole forming flowers, fruits and pictures representing landscapes. It was set in ebony with the side pictures in lacquer and the background of aventurine with small medallions, it was adorned with baguettes, a drapery, a frieze, a spray of leaves and flowers, roses and an open-work gallery. This chest of drawers was  $4\frac{1}{2}$  feet in length, 19 inches deep and 34 inches high. The bronze work was covered with ormolu. The experts valued it at seven thousand francs.

2° Under No. 2 figured a Sèvres China vase with lid. The sides were ribbed like a melon. The background was light blue, adorned with gilt stalks of the same matter, gilt rings and buds around the neck. Height, 16 inches; value, five hundred francs.

3° Next came a round four-legged table with lacquer fluting; the ground was of ebony and aventurine; the tray was also lacquer, it was adorned with a frieze, a frame, a gallery and a rose of unpolished gilt bronze. Height,  $26\frac{1}{2}$  inches, width,  $17\frac{1}{2}$  and depth 13 inches. This small table was valued at fifteen hundred francs.

4° The experts valued at no less than eight thousand francs a certain writing-table with revolving lid. It

<sup>1</sup> As much as possible I have reproduced the experts' inventory word for word, I must therefore apologise if there are any mistakes, for I am not very familiar with the grammar of the eighteenth century Art, and, consequently, may have fallen into some solecisms.

stood on four terminal shaped legs ; the panels were of laquer-work, the background was ornamented with storks and grotesque figures. There were five drawers in the lower part, and three others below the frieze. The inside was of grey wood with mosaic. The whole was ornamented with an indented frieze, a frame, a gallery, fillets, fluting, and feet of unpolished gilt bronze. The upper part was of coloured Spanish marble. Dimensions ; height, 3 feet, 3 inches ; width, 3 feet ; depth, 16 inches.

5° After this article come two Sèvres vases with light blue ground, a frieze and gilt fillets, handles and garlands of laurel leaves. Both had lids. They were 13 inches high and were together worth eight hundred francs.

6° After these two vases, the experts placed two convex corner-pieces, the panels of which were of lacquer-work with boughs of old Japan ; black background with drapery, frame, frieze with roses, branches of laurel leaves and spray of flowers ; the legs were in the shape of a quiver ; the upper part was in black Aleppo marble. These two small pieces of furniture were 2 feet, 10 inches high. Their value was two thousand francs.

7° A lacquer cellaret was also valued at two thousand francs. It was composed of five rock crystal bottles, two of which were square, and two flat. The necks and stoppers were of many-coloured gold, as also a small goblet likewise of rock crystal.

8° Two thousand francs for a China inkstand. Blue and white ground. Garnished with two candlesticks on marble slabs. Frame and feet of gilt ormolu.

9° A little further on, we come across a jug and basin in Sèvres China. White and flame-coloured ground Medallion representing the Rape of Europa. Other ornaments representing flowers. Lid adorned with silver-gilt. Value, six hundred francs.

10° A pair of horn-shaped vases came from the same manufacture. Ground and socket were gridelin. They

were mounted on tripods adorned with masks (heads of Satyrs) and bordered with lace. The tripods and lace-work were of gilt ormolu, inside of copper-gilt. These two vases were 11 inches high and were worth five hundred francs.

11° Three other vases came likewise from Sèvres. The ground was green. The masks formed the handles. They were adorned with garlands of oak-leaves. Piedouches of gilt ormolu. The ornaments of the centre one rising from the bulk and forming acanthus leaves. About 12 inches high. Price, six hundred francs.

12° Amongst other articles from this manufacture wherewith the Duchess had adorned her house, we will mention two vases, 3½ inches high. Light blue ground. Ovoid shape lengthened into neck. Handles rising from the bulk. Gilt garlands, boughs and buds. The experts valued them at six hundred francs. There were also three full-length figures made of biscuit, standing on blue china pedestals, adorned with gold fillets. They represented Pascal, Bossuet and Fénelon. Valued at one thousand livres.

Some twenty pictures adorned the walls of the Tingry Mansion. As they were mostly portraits of courtiers and more especially of members of the Royal Family, the experts had ignored them. However, they took a few paintings; amongst others, two small pictures by Lagrenée, Senior. They were 16 inches high by 12 broad, and made a pair. The one represented Diana and Endymion, the other a woman bathing.<sup>1</sup>

If this enumeration—which we would willingly prolong

<sup>1</sup> Besides these valuable objects, many articles belonging to Madame Adélaïde were found in the hôtel. They were withdrawn before the auction began. A number of utensils were set aside for the use of the military hospitals, for instance: bath-tubs, boilers, filters, bedpans, saucepans, stew-pots, small saucepans, candlesticks, etc. Some of these things belonged to "*ci-devant Adélaïde de France*," and some to "*la Narbonne*." The account is to be found in the *Arch. Nat.*, F<sup>7</sup>, 4389.

but for the fear of becoming tedious—impresses us agreeably from an artistic point of view, nothing can be more doleful, on the other hand, than the account of the sale of the furniture, and, above all, of the clothes of the exiled Duchess. The profaning of the home by a brutal auction, the private alcoves violated, the locks forced open, the cupboards emptied, the clothes, that still bore the shape of the bodies they had covered, thrown, like slaughter-house remains, on to the rough table; the hands—Oh! those strange hands, rummaging amongst another's most private possessions! All that shocks us as a crime against human dignity and the majesty of Death. In this case, the victim was not dead, but a woman in full possession of her life, an aristocrat, a patrician who, a few days before, crossed the road between two rows of bended heads. Those same people, who had bowed to her, now stood erect, vieing with each other in plundering, anxious to adorn themselves with her clothes, eager to avenge themselves on her for the baseness they had shown before. Let us mention at random some items in the official list of the auction.

1. Six chemises to the Citoyenne Baptiste for 24 livres, 5 sous.
2. Six other chemises sold for 29 livres, 19 sous to the Citoyen Lecointre.
3. A dress of white chiné taffeta and underskirt bought by the Citoyenne Cogné for 19 livres, 1 sou.
4. A *cul de singe* dress granted to Dame Duclos for 22 livres, 2 sous.
5. Six chemises to Dame Masson for 46 livres, 1 sou.
6. A dressing-jacket and two white linen dressing-gowns for 16 livres to Dame Laté.
7. Six chemises sold to the Citoyenne Vergus for 52 livres, 19 sous.

8. Several six-leaved screens made of Utrecht velvet, green cloth, and satin.
9. Two sofa-frames of carved, gilded wood purchased by the Citoyenne Quittel for 92 livres, 19 sous.
10. A confessional arm-chair covered in green damask passed into the hands of the Citoyen Sommesson, door-keeper of the Tingry Hôtel, and by trade an upholsterer, for the sum of 65 livres.
11. Two embroidery frames.
12. A four-post bed with crimson damask sold to the Citoyen Grincourt for 212 livres.
13. Another four-post bed with satin hangings, to the same, for 420 livres.
14. Two sheets sold to the Citoyenne Baptiste for 42 livres, 3 sous.
15. Two others to the Citoyenne Madeline for 75 livres.
16. Two others to the Citoyenne Guénon for 76 livres, 2 sous.
17. A black paduasoy dress and underskirt with laced bodice sold as Court-dresses to the Citoyen Vergus for 97 livres.
18. A dress with underskirt of puce-coloured broché satin with flower design, to Dame Hevé for 32 livres.
19. Two brass spinning-wheels for spinning silk to the Citoyen Vergus for 40 livres.
20. Four curtains of light-blue English taffeta to the Citoyen Lecointre for 153 livres.
21. A walking-stick with silver ferrule to Dame Baptiste for 18 livres.
22. Six pictures representing various subjects painted on canvas to the Citoyenne Loth for 7 livres, 1 sou.
23. Four pictures covered with glass to the Citoyen Colombin for 5 livres, 3 sous.
24. A map representing the town of Rheims, and four

- pictures painted on canvas, to Dame Gollié for 9 livres, 7 sous.
25. Several other pictures sold for the same price.
  26. A small *ambulante* with China panels to Dame Quittel for 142 livres.
  27. A picture representing the late Queen, and purchased for 18 livres, 10 sous by a prudent anonymous person.
  28. A mahogany desk with revolving lid sold to the Citoyen Gohin for 550 livres.
  29. Another to the Citoyen Brandon for 301 livres.
  30. A timepiece with a deal case to the Citoyen Lecointre for 220 livres.
  31. Another clock to Dame Rouyer (formerly lady's-maid to Madame de Narbonne).
  32. A great number of dresses with their underskirts sold to different *citoyennes* for prices varying from 30 to 40 livres.
  33. A rosewood writing-desk with marble top sold to the Citoyen Crance for the sum of 45 livres, 4 sous.
  34. A great number of mattresses sold, one with the other, from 70 to 90 livres.
  35. An Aubusson carpet sold to the Citoyen Lecointre for 38 livres, 2 sous.
  36. Several lots of chemises sold by the half-dozen ; several lots of dresses with underskirts, not to mention dressing-gowns, sheets, table-napkins and cloths, etc.
  37. A yellow stage-coach with four seats sold to the Citoyen Letourneur for 691 livres.
  38. An olive-coloured cabriolet with two seats to the Citoyen Huard for 391 livres.
  39. A white satin brocade couch and frame to the Citoyen Clavecin for 240 livres.
  40. A Court dress with train and laced bodice of striped printemps velvet for 134 livres.

41. Another Court dress, skirt and train of violet watered silk, trimmed with tinsel, bought by the Citoyen Lecointre for 167 livres.<sup>1</sup>
  42. A large Aubusson carpet bought by the Citoyen Gohin for 654 livres.
  43. One hundred and thirty-two bottles of Bordeaux for 328 livres, 8 sous.
  44. One hundred and twenty bottles of *Vin du Pape* for 214 livres, 4 sous.
  45. One hundred and twenty bottles of Champagne for 164 livres, 7 sous.
  46. Grenache wine, Madeira wine, Muscadel, and Sauterne.
- Total of the sale : 31739 livres, 50 sous.<sup>2</sup>

Thus the Duchess's chemises and robes were worn out by the Citoyennes Vergus, Baptiste, Masson and others. For years, these "ladies" slept between her sheets, rested on her mattresses, drank her wines and ate off her plate. The things that were not purchased went to swing on hooks in the shop of some dealer in old clothes, and, finally, having no longer shape or name, alighted in a rag-gatherer's basket. Of what use was it to have been lady-in-waiting, Duchess and Spanish Grandee!

However, if Madame de Narbonne had returned to France as soon as the doors began to open to the *émigrés*,

<sup>1</sup> This "Citoyen Lecointre," who takes such an active part in the auction, may very well be Laurent Lecointre, the Conventionalist, who was in command of the National Guards of Versailles during the October days of the year 1789, and who, throughout the Revolution, played a fairly important part in Paris and in the above-mentioned town. He had just published: "*Eclaircissements sur le compte-rendu à l'Assemblée Nationale par M. Narbonne, exministre de la guerre pour ce qui concerne la partie des armes*" (7th April 1792, in -8, 72 pages). If he is the man here in question, we cannot refrain from being surprised that such a fierce Republican should purchase this Court dress, trimmed with tinsel, and the underskirt and train.

<sup>2</sup> *Arch. of Seine-et-Oise*. Series 9. Narbonne papers.



and had established herself once more in Versailles, she might, perhaps, by making use of money and much perseverance, have succeeded in recovering some part of her furniture. But she was in no hurry to return, and when, at length, she came to a decision, she does not appear to have troubled herself much about the Tingry Mansion. She had dwelt in this house only for two years, from 1787-1789; it did not belong to her; she had merely been the leaseholder, and she had not had time to become deeply attached to it. La Bove was a very different matter! La Bove had been her foible, her caprice. Her whole being had taken root there, she had arranged it according to her ideas, had adorned it to suit her taste, in fact, put her own stamp on it everywhere. La Bove had become part of herself, and, if there was anything she cared for in this world, it was La Bove. We last saw her steward endeavouring to save La Bove by smiling obsequiously on the authorities of the District of Laon. Nevertheless, on 12th September 1793, the latter issued an order that the lead-work and the castle gates should be removed. On the 10th January 1795, the former owner, Gaspard-Louis de Caze, to whom the Duchess still owed 300,000 livres, bought the main building and the out-lying buildings within the moats with the money owed to him, and a balance of 160,000 francs. On 14th February 1797, the park was sold to him for 26,600 livres. The *château* was then pulled down, and the estate divided into four lots, which were put up for sale. On the 7th March 1814, the battle of Craonne took place on the outskirts of this property. All that now remains of La Bove is the steward's house which has been enlarged and turned into a small modern *château*.<sup>1</sup>

Her long stay, in former days, at Parma and Colorno enabled Madame de Narbonne to appreciate more keenly

<sup>1</sup> Th. Courtaux *Notice historique sur La Bove*, pp. 77-80.

than any of the *émigrés* the Italian scenery, and, no doubt, she felt more deeply than they the unrivalled and sovereign beauty of the panorama that stretched before her eyes as, towards the close of one of those marvellous days of the Roman spring-time, she drove to one of the heights that overlook the Eternal City—to the terrace of the Villa Pamphili, for instance. As the sun faded away behind the hills, the dome of St Peter's stood out before her gaze, purer and more glorious in the atmosphere that seemed to have become clearer, whilst the budding verdure in the gardens gladdened the pediments of fallen temples, the porches of churches and the corners of marble palaces. However, we may believe that amidst this crowd of noble buildings, bruised as she was by many blows, Madame Adélaïde's lady-in-waiting found herself turning instinctively towards the ruins that were henceforth the only suitable image of her life. When in the evening she returned to her Princess and resumed the management of the shadowy household where death, captivity and treason had left so many empty places and caused so much mourning ; when she drew near to the little company comprising all that remained of the service of honour of Louis XV's. two daughters and felt weighing on her looks that had become hostile since her son's so-called " treason,"<sup>1</sup> then she might wonder if, after all, she had chosen well her way in life. Would it not have been better if, after Madame Infanta's death, she had retired and gone to :

*Vivre avec son mari le reste de son âge*

in that little corner of Agenais where, if they had not succeeded in becoming rich, the Narbonnes had, at least, accumulated a fund of esteem and regard from which her husband, their descendant, was now drawing the

<sup>1</sup> *Mémoires de Madame de Boigne*, vol. i. p. 105 ; Forneron : *Histoire Générale des émigrés*, vol. i. p. 213.

priceless tranquillity in which he lived ? If this was the origin of their disagreement, had not events proved her to be in the wrong ? If she had consented to follow him to Autrac, would she not have spared herself the sorrows brought on her by her second son ? If he had been without money and had not had a Princess as godmother, would this spoilt child have led the wild life that had brought him and his mother into such straits ? On the contrary, his remarkable talents might perhaps have had free scope to develop themselves. Nevertheless, rather than accept this hidden, but peaceful life, this monotonous, but secure existence, she had chosen to remain at Court because she had been brought up at Versailles and thought that atmosphere was the only one in which she could breathe. But what profit had she reaped ? During thirty years, she had been considered an intriguing woman, and, finally, she had been thrown into an abyss of misery.

Even supposing that up to the first days of the Revolution she had repaid punctually by her services the favours she had received, had not the decrees of the National Assembly released her of her contract ? How many ladies, attached like herself to the Royal Family, had then made their last courtesy to their mistress and withdrawn ? Amongst these, the most conspicuous of all, the Duchess de Polignac. Madame Adélaïde's lady-in-waiting knew that she was not much loved by those who were under her orders. She was as much exposed to danger as the Queen's favourite, for, even if her severity had not made many malcontents amongst the menials at Bellevue, it is certain there were traitors amongst them. As it is never too late to act wisely, she could then have returned to her husband and have hidden herself with him at Autrac, enjoying the security granted to the Narbonnes. Such thoughts, no doubt, assailed the Duchess during the hours of sadness that had become

so numerous since she was in Rome. Many weaker souls would have been crushed beneath their weight. But if Madame de Narbonne knew much sorrow, she was incapable of being cowardly. Her misfortune was indeed great, but how much worse was that of her mistress whose birth and education had so little prepared her to face adversity! After having been for thirty years honoured by her friendship and overwhelmed with her gifts and favours, could she forsake her at the moment when misfortune befell her benefactress? Madame de Narbonne belonged to too fine a race, her soul was too noble, her heart too true for her to be capable of such disloyalty. Devoted as she was to Madame Adélaïde, death itself could not separate her from her mistress and friend.

## CHAPTER XII

### FRESH TRIALS—DEATH OF MESDAMES DE FRANCE

THE consequences of the events which shook their country, staining it with bloodshed during the Terror, had been cruel indeed to the French refugees in Rome, and perhaps more especially so to the aunts of Louis XVI. ; however, although the success of the revolutionary armies and the propagation of their ideas might well alarm the foreign governments, the shelter which the Sovereign Pontiff had obtained in 1791 for Mesdames of France, beneath the shadow of St Peter's, had shielded them from any serious danger, even during Bassville's stay in Rome.<sup>1</sup> Suddenly, in the beginning of the year 1796, Bonaparte's startling campaign in the north of Italy roused them from this delusive sensation of security. The pontifical government having raised a secret opposition to the

<sup>1</sup> In November 1792 Hugon de Bassville left the French Embassy in Naples, ostensibly to go and admire the monuments of Rome. He soon began to play the part of a Jacobin diplomatist. He demanded that the *émigrés* who flocked towards the Pontifical States should be turned out; the peace enjoyed by the "*Misses Capet*," exasperated him, and he treated the "*scarlet geese of the Capitol*," with the utmost arrogance. He wished to remove the escutcheon bearing the fleurs-de-lys (flower de luce) of France that surmounted the Embassy, and to replace it by an effigy of Liberty painted by the inmates of the French Academy. The Cardinal Secretary of State interposed and they came to angry words. The populace took up the quarrel and, on 13th January 1793, the mob gathered round the Academy, hooting the French official and his family as they drove along the Corso. The crowd grew more and more excited, and pursued them to the house where they had flown for shelter. Bassville, who was seriously wounded in the fray, was dragged to the guard-house where he died.

establishment of the Padane and Transpadane Republics and massed troops in Romagna, after the capitulation of Mantua, Bonaparte scattered the Pope's army and imposed on him the onerous and humiliating treaty of Tolentino (17th February 1797). From that moment onwards the excitement grew steadily in the Eternal City. We may remember Joseph Bonaparte's embassy, the attempted revolt in which General Duphot perished\* (27th December 1797), General Berthier's march on Rome, the taking of the Castle of San Angelo and the final establishment of the Roman Republic (5th February 1798). As soon as the agents of the Directory appeared, Mesdames withdrew to Albano, fifteen miles south of Rome. At the beginning of the following year they asked the King of Naples to allow them to take refuge in his States. The King, Ferdinand IV., and the Queen, Marie Caroline, contented themselves with lending them two old coaches and six bad horses, allowing them, at the same time, to dwell in the old Palace at Caserto, situated near the one built by their predecessor Charles III., and in which they themselves resided. Until December 1798 Mesdames lived in this place which was fifteen to eighteen miles north of Naples. They were reduced to providing for their suite and their household at their own expense, that is to say, with borrowed money, since they no longer possessed anything.<sup>1</sup> We may also remember that after the Battle of Aboukir (1st August 1798), being pressed by Nelson, Ferdinand decided to break the treaty that bound him to France. He assembled thirty thousand men, intending to take possession of Tuscany and the Papal States and then to join the Austrians in invading Provence. In order to accomplish this plan the Emperor sent him General Mack, the greatest warrior

<sup>1</sup> Letters of Queen Caroline to her daughter, the Empress of Germany, published by V. Helfert and reproduced by Forneron in *Histoire Générale des émigrés*, vol. ii. p. 405, etc.

in Europe. However, he was defeated by Championnet on 9th December, and left on the battlefield one thousand dead, nine hundred wounded, ten thousand prisoners, thirty cannon, nine flags, and all his baggage.

Two days later King Ferdinand returned in disguise to Caserto. His army was disbanded, Mack was distracted; Nelson could not get himself listened to, and \* Championnet was marching towards Naples. It is impossible to describe the anger and confusion that seized the Neapolitans when they heard of Mack's defeat and the arrival of the French forces. The Court, the commoners and the populace cast the blame on each other. The Queen was beside herself with indignation. On 21st December she wrote to the Emperor, her son-in-law, saying: "The people gather together, screaming and howling. They say they want to plunder and punish the resident Jacobins: that is to say, they would ransack everything before the arrival of the French troops. A massacre—private passions, and with all this, an infamous army that offers no resistance. . . . We are twelve in family, counting the two aged Mesdames of France, whom for the honour and integrity of our name we are bound to safeguard . . . the troops have run away, calling out *salvo chi puole!*" Ten days later she adds in her peculiar jargon: <sup>1</sup> "The people, in a fury, have come in crowds beneath the balconies to shoot a man whom they say is a Jacobin . . . those killed were some unfortunate *émigrés* . . . the massacre of the *émigrés* having continued, the people became tumultuous. . . .

<sup>1</sup> "Est venu le peuple en fureur à foule à tirer homme sous les balcons, qu'ils disaient Jacobin . . . les tués ont été des malheureux *émigrés* . . . les massacres ayant continué aux *émigrés*, le peuple à tumultué. . . . Les deux pauvres dames françaises iront à Manfredonia, car on n'ose plus risquer de les faire voir. Si les deux malheureuses vieilles ne pouvaient venir en Sicile et devraient venir à Trieste, ayez pitié d'eux, . . . donnez-leur une ville, un endroit, nous tacherons de leur donner à vivre. Hélas! Je sens si fort ce que c'est que le malheur."



*Natta, past.*

MARIE ADELAÏDE DE FRANCE.





The two poor French ladies will go to Manfredonia for we no longer dare to let them be seen here. If the two unfortunate old ladies cannot reach Sicily and are obliged to go to Trieste, have pity on them. Give them a city or some place. We will endeavour to provide them with means. Alas! I feel so keenly what it means to be unfortunate!"<sup>1</sup>

The Court of Naples saw that the one chance of safety was to flee. They therefore retired to Sicily, escorted or protected by the British fleet, and, fearing that the populace might prevent their embarking, they fled secretly in the dead of night. However, with utter disregard of the formal promises which the Queen had made to Mesdames themselves, and in spite of all she had written to the Emperor, no measures had been taken to enable the Princesses to join the fugitives.<sup>2</sup>

In reality they were a terrible burden, a dead weight on the hands of Marie Caroline, and she was eager to leave them to the care of the Emperor. The vessel carrying away the Royal Family was sailing along towards Palermo, when on Saturday, 22nd December, at ten o'clock in the morning, Mesdames at length received letters from the King and Queen informing them of their departure and dissuading them from going down

<sup>1</sup> Forneron, *Histoire Générale des Émigrés*, p. 407.

<sup>2</sup> The order of embarkment signed by Nelson himself bears the name of each person who was to be admitted on board his ships, but there is no trace of Mesdames. (British Museum, *Bibl. Eg.*, vol. v. 1623, page 3, quoted by A. Gagniere in *La Reine Marie Caroline de Naples*, p. 105). On 13th December the Queen had informed Mesdames of her plan of retiring to Sicily; she offered them the shelter of *this bit of land that she still possessed, and wished to share with them the bread of tears*. On 15th of 16th inst. it was decided that they should leave by the vessel that was to convey the Royal Family to Sicily; they were given a formal promise that they should be informed in due time. Nevertheless, on 18th, the shipping of the packages began and yet Mesdames received no word concerning the course they were to take. On the same evening the Royal Family sailed. (Chastellux, *Relation du voyage de Mesdames*, pp. 18-20.)

into Naples, where the people were very much incensed against the French. On the contrary, they advised them to go to Manfredonia, a port on the Adriatic, where they would find a frigate destined to convey to Trieste the Marquis de Gallo to whom was entrusted a mission at the court of Vienna. Thus they could travel with him. The courier who brought these letters was to hand them a sum of six thousand gold ducats wherewith they could meet the first expenses of their change of abode.<sup>1</sup> It being very evident that they were not wanted in Sicily, the Princesses decided to go to Trieste. As there was not time to lose, they got into their coach on the following day at two o'clock in the morning, taking with them the Duchess de Narbonne, the Count and Countess de Chastellux with their son. Countess Louis de Narbonne, Mesdemoiselles de Chastellux, the Bishop of Pergamus, a doctor and a surgeon-dentist placed themselves in a second coach, the other carriages were to follow at intervals of twelve hours.

Let us reflect for one moment on the situation. They had no military escort. They were under the protection of one single nobleman, Count de Chastellux, whose unshaken faith and devotedness had been tried, but who was visibly crushed beneath his difficult mission. It was no easy task to conduct, in the middle of the night, the two old French Princesses, disabled by age, sickness<sup>2</sup> and fear, across one hundred and twenty-five to a hundred and fifty miles in a foreign land, where the inhabitants were wildly incensed against their fellow-countrymen. Although snow was generally rare in this mountainous country, it had just fallen so thickly that the roads were blotted out in many places. Moreover, it was infested by

<sup>1</sup> *Annales de l'académie de Maçon*, 2nd series, vol. vii. 1890, p. 10. (Account given by Countess Louis de Narbonne of Mesdames' flight and their adventures in the Adriatic before their arrival in Trieste.)

<sup>2</sup> Mme. Victoire had long been suffering from a cancer in the breast.

robbers, the most terrible of whom was the notorious Fra Diavolo, renowned for his daring and cruelty. They had fled so far away from the storm that they had thought themselves in safety; but the tempest had overtaken them in Rome, forcing them to fold up their tents and flee once more. The storm had now increased in violence, sweeping them along—further and further away, God alone knew towards what goal. Was there no spot on earth where they might dwell in peace and security? A few miles from Caserto a courier coming from Manfredonia informed Mesdames that the frigate on which they expected to sail had left the port. What were they to do? Should they retrace their steps and sail from Naples for Sicily, abandoning all thought of Trieste. But every hour made Naples more dangerous for them. They decided to proceed on their way. On 24th December when they reached the immense and barren plain of Foggia, on the Eastern slope of the Appennines, a terrible snow-storm burst upon them, and it took them eleven hours to travel over twelve miles. Several times they were obliged to leave their carriage and even to make use of another one. The footmen were almost frozen to death on their seats. The disease from which Madame Victoire was suffering became worse, and from that day forward her condition was most alarming. Formerly, when one of Louis XV's daughters went to Vichy or Plombières to go through the usual treatment, the exigencies of her service called forth the King's representatives everywhere she went. As we may see by the accounts of the time, she was escorted, honoured, served and protected by the following train of attendants: a gentleman-in-waiting, a lady-in-waiting, a lady-of-the-chamber, three lady-companions, one first woman of the bedchamber, three others, three gentlemen ushers, one footman, one groom of the bedchamber, two women for the wardrobe, one woman to look after the bed-linen, one porter, one adjutant

of the life-guardsmen, one equerry to the King, one equerry to Madame, two grooms, two pages, one doctor, one surgeon, one apothecary, one confessor, one corporal, one lance-corporal, two life-guardsmen, and finally two footmen acting as upholsterers. Twenty-two carriages, one hundred and thirty draught-horses, sixty-six riding horses hardly sufficed to transport all these attendants and their luggage.<sup>1</sup> The age, the scene, the people—all had changed.

Fresh tribulations awaited Mesdames when, on the 25th December, they arrived worn-out at Manfredonia. Whilst the Count de Chastellux asked for another frigate from Sicily, the French troops advanced, spreading everywhere their revolutionary ideas. The country, forsaken by its sovereigns, fell a prey to anarchy. As the frigate he had demanded failed to arrive, Chastellux applied to a Russian Admiral who was cruising outside Corfu; he wrote to Nelson and to the Marquis de Nissa, commander of the Portuguese fleet. But they were all preyed upon by cares that engrossed them far more than the task of obtaining a passage for the two old spinsters and their attendants. The rumours—some true, some false—became more and more alarming, so that, in spite of Madame Victoire who was sinking rapidly, Chastellux forced the Princesses to go from Manfredonia to Foggia, where he thought they would be safer. Having been mistaken in this respect, he brought them back to Manfredonia and then conducted them again to Foggia.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Arch. Nat.*, O.<sup>1</sup> 3762<sup>a</sup> and 3773<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> At Foggia the Countess de Narbonne and her daughter spent the night stretched out on chairs, their mattresses consisting in cushions taken from the carriages. ◆

"The room in which we found ourselves," said she, "looked like a bivouack. We were huddled up with Mesdames' attendants, some were rolled in their cloaks; some were seated on whatever they could find, and others, preferring to sacrifice their sleep rather than be frozen, were keeping the fire up."

Weary of these aimless journeys and hard pressed by the Republican army, Mesdames began to fear being imprisoned in the Kingdom of Naples, so, on 15th January 1799, they at length started for Brindisi where the Russian vessels had arrived. After having made a first halt at Trani in order to allow their attendants to reach them with their luggage, they were waiting for news at Bari, when in the morning of 4th February a rumour was spread about that the French commissaries were drawing near. Without waiting to hear more, Chastellux immediately pressed Mesdames to flee. The fear of falling into the hands of hostile rovers made the land route impracticable. They had no choice but to travel by sea. At Manfredonia they had hired a *trabaccolo* to convey their attendants and the two coaches. This boat was a sort of decked vessel that was generally used for carrying oil from Apulia over to Trieste. For want of a better conveyance they all embarked, that same day, on this small ship. Sixty people—women, children, priests and aged men—they were all crowded together with their luggage. Mesdames had but one room with two small beds; their two ladies-in-waiting slept on the floor on mattresses that were used as chairs during the daytime; the others stretched themselves on the matting or on the carriage cushions. "In this room," writes Countess Louis, "there were fourteen women and children covered with vermin, and our poor dying Princess who, in spite of all her courage, could not conceal from her unfortunate sister the pangs of her agony. Within this very small space we had to eat, drink, sleep and—worst of all—pay the debt of nature, for the sea was constantly rough. It is difficult to realise how terrible our position was." There was just standing-room for each one; air and light filtered in through an opening that was closed at night. Nevertheless they were obliged to spend thirty-one days on this *trabaccolo*. They could not undress

themselves, they were at the mercy of the winds, threatened with being stranded and taken by the pirates or abandoned by the crew, who only agreed not to desert them on being promised an exorbitant reward. On 6th February they entered the Brindisi roads: the Russian vessels had left on 3rd inst. Several couriers were despatched successively to Corfu, begging the Admiral to assist Mesdames in reaching Trieste. One day, whilst they were waiting for his decision, Mesdames saw a number of boats full of people, decked with the Neapolitan colours, sailing towards their vessel. A man then appeared, and, with the greatest ease, begged for the honour of presenting his respect to the two Princesses whom he called his aunts: *alle care zie*. Having been admitted into their presence, he kissed their hands most gallantly, and, shutting himself up in their small room, told them the following tale:—He was a Corsican and was called Count de Corbara. He was an *émigré* and had been travelling on foot through the Kingdom of Naples. Although he had no money and was poorly dressed, the peasants had, nevertheless, taken him for the Hereditary Prince, son of King Ferdinand, and, in spite of his denial, he had not been able to get the idea out of their heads. As this delusion had taken a strong hold on the minds of the people, who, owing to the present circumstances, were willing to believe anything, Corbara had decided to play the part they had forced on him. Escorted by a few Corsicans whom he had made his chamberlains, he travelled through Apulia, dismissing all magistrates liable to suspicion, exacting taxes for the war and putting fines on those who had been rash enough to adhere to the Republic. The villagers hastened from all parts to look on their future sovereign, and to offer him their services and their property. The inhabitants of Brindisi had fallen into the same error. They had received him with great pomp and conducted him to the Cathedral;

they came to him for orders, and imprisoned all the Jacobins. Those who really knew the Hereditary Prince did not dare to express their doubts publicly, for they would have been massacred. As this adventure had revived the zeal of the people for the reigning dynasty, and was likely to favour the return of the legitimate sovereigns to Naples, Mesdames did not dare to treat Corbara as an impostor; they simply dismissed him courteously. Later on they learnt, that, having started for Corfu in quest of help, he had been captured at sea by a Barbaresque pirate; the British Consul had re-deemed him and he had met with a good reception at Palermo.<sup>1</sup>

It was not until the 5th March that the frigate demanded of the Russian Admiral for the service of the daughters of Louis XV., entered, at length, the Brindisi roads. Contrary winds prevented them from getting under sail before the 15th inst. On the 16th a fearful tempest broke loose in the evening and lasted until the 19th. The storm threatened the vessel which was old, and, having been in constant use ever since she left the Black Sea, was much damaged and quite unseaworthy. More than twenty times the cannon that were in Mesdames' bedroom, seemed about to break their moorings and crush the people who lay on the floor stretched out on mattresses. The storm had hardly abated, when they caught sight of a vessel with seventy-four cannon, and took it for the "*Généreux*," a French battleship that was cruising in the Mediterranean. The Captain gave orders to prepare for a fight, and sent Mesdames to the bottom of the hold. Without uttering a word of complaint, Madame Victoire rose from the bed of suffering, to which she was now constantly confined, and, although she could hardly stand, followed Madame Adélaïde. But it was only a

<sup>1</sup> *Annales de l'académie de Macon*, 2nd series, vol. vii., 1890, pp. 21-23; Chastellux, *op. cit.*, pp. 39-41; Gaglière, *op. cit.*, pp. 122-124.



false alarm. It was a Portuguese vessel that Nelson had at length sent to the two princesses. She sailed away after an exchange of signals that neither crew could understand. They put into Corfu, where Madame Victoire's condition, and various other circumstances, obliged them to remain until the 12th May. On that day, a whole fleet made up of Russian, Turkish, and Portuguese vessels, set sail and escorted Mesdames as far as the Dalmatian Isles. Finally, on 19th May, they entered the Trieste roads, and landed on the following day. Complying with instructions from his court, the Spanish Consul gave hospitality to them in his house. The month spent with sixty people on a narrow vessel, beneath a deck that was only  $4\frac{1}{2}$  feet high, the storms, the food that was often unwholesome, and the fact that at sea it had been impossible for her to follow any diet, all these circumstances, added to the moral torture she had endured, had exhausted Madame Victoire's failing strength. At Corfu her condition had been so serious that she had received the last sacraments, and a few days after her arrival in Trieste it became evident that there was no longer room for hope. After a long and painful agony, she died peacefully on 7th June, at the age of seventy-six years. Two *émigrés* and two French merchants living in Trieste, bore her coffin to the Cathedral where she was buried.

From this moment, Madame Adélaïde began to sink. Although, by accepting his proposal, she would have been less exposed to falling into the hands of the French, she refused the shelter which the Emperor offered her at Laibach, at Fiume in Illyria, and at Agram in Croatia. From her early childhood, she had lived in closest union with Madame Victoire, and the death of the Princess broke all the ties that bound her sister to life. She was broken by the effort she had made ever since their departure from Caserte to sustain her sister's failing





courage and to bear up stoutly against the misfortunes that overwhelmed them. The reaction was too great, and she was henceforward nothing more than a body without a soul. This made the Duchess de Narbonne feel more cruelly than ever the blows that had been dealt her by the Revolution. More than ever before, she bemoaned the absence of her children, and above all that of her son Louis, Madame Adélaïde's beloved god-child. He alone, with his lively wit, might have been able to make the Princess take some interest in life. She wrote to her sons; they hastened from Germany where they were both residing separately, they arrived in time to see Madame Adélaïde on her deathbed, and to assist at her last moments. Several times, she asked for her lady-in-waiting, but the hopeless condition of the aged Princess had prostrated the Duchess de Narbonne. Her daughter-in-law had to undertake for her the painful duty of closing Madame Adélaïde's eyes, as she had done before when Madame Victoire died. The last surviving daughter of Louis XV. expired at Trieste, on 18th February 1800, eight months after Madame Victoire.<sup>1</sup>

A great deal has been said about the misery endured by the *émigrés*. Many fugitives have given us an account of their illusions, their sufferings, their poverty, and the humiliations that were imposed on them. Many historians have traced thrilling pictures of all these calamities. Nevertheless no tale can be more dramatic than the adventures Mesdames of France went through from the time they fled from Rome, up to the day when they reached Trieste—mere wrecks of their former selves.

<sup>1</sup> Administrative Archives of the War Office (*documents concerning the Viscount de Narbonne*.) (Letter of the Minister, 10th September 1816); *Mémoires du Comte de Rambuteau* (Letter written by Louis de Narbonne to the First Consul), pp. 34-39; *Annales de l'académie de Macon*, 2nd series, vol. vii., 1890, pp. 31-32; Chastellux: *Relation du Voyage de Mesdames*, pp. 63-65, 79; C. Stryienski: *Mesdames de France*, filles de Louis XV., p. 341.

Through her husband's narrative, we learn with what devotedness Madame de Chastellux, lady-in-waiting to Madame Victoire, surrounded this Princess during the trials that turned her last days into a perfect Calvary. No one, however, has left us an account of what Madame de Narbonne suffered. Knowing as we do that Madame Adélaïde was wont to draw strength from the energetic soul of her friend, we cannot doubt but that she leaned on her in these hours of anguish, and that she thus received a little comfort. If we want to get some idea of what Madame de Narbonne went through during those bitter days, we must remember that she made heroic efforts to prevent her mistress from sinking beneath her trials and that she herself was exhausted by fatigue, privations, anxiety about her relations, want of money, and misgivings for the future. We have to guess at all this, for Madame de Narbonne was as proud as she was courageous. At an early age she had learnt the value of discretion, essential virtue for a lady-in-waiting, and when her mistress had been in full prosperity she had never said a word concerning her service, nor spoken about her own affairs when she herself was overwhelmed with favours. So much the more reason for her hiding their common misfortunes. In tracing this page in her life, we are obliged to follow the information given by others.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> M. Stryenski erroneously ascribes both to the Duchess and to the Countess de Narbonne, the account of Mesdames' journey, inserted in the *Annales de l'académie de Macon*. The Countess is the real author of this narrative.

## CHAPTER XIII

### LOUIS DE NARBONNE IN EXILE

**W**HILST the Duchess de Narbonne shared the evil fortunes of her mistress, her aged husband who had remained in France, lived unmolested, through the Terror, shutting himself up, either in his hotel at Agen or in his castle at Aubiac. After having been made Major-General on 17th April 1790, his eldest son, the Viscount de Narbonne, made over to his successor the regiment of Forez, of which he had been in command since 1782, and joined his father in Gascony. In 1791, he emigrated and went to Coblenz where he served as volunteer in the army of the princes, took part in the defence of Maestricht (1793) and finally laid down his arms on 31st December of the same year.<sup>1</sup> As for his younger son, he was in Kensington, where he had arrived on 23rd August, with the help of the German, Bollmann. By degrees other Constitutionalists, victims to their political views, reached England by various ways and means, and, after some hesitation joined him at Norbury (Surrey), a few miles from London. Amongst the latter were Mathieu de Montmorency, Malouet and Count de Jaucourt, who had all been likewise saved through Madame de Staël. After having first come on a mission, Talleyrand re-appeared in England on 18th September, provided with a passport signed by Danton; then came others, amongst which Lally-Tollendal and d'Arblay,

<sup>1</sup> Archives of the War Office (documents concerning the Viscount de Narbonne)—*Arch. Nat.*, F<sup>o</sup>. 6302.

who belonged to Lafayette's staff. Madame de Staël soon arrived also. Taking as a pretext the invasion of Savoy and the troubles that disturbed Geneva, she left Coppet where she had sought a refuge after the September massacres, and joined her friends in England, putting her purse at their disposal and granting them the most liberal hospitality in her house, Juniper Hall, near Mickleham. The history of this little group of Constitutional *émigrés* whose intelligence and political opinions distinguished them from the absolute Royalists, has been written by Fanny Burney, one of the two daughters of a Doctor of music who lived in the neighbourhood. Miss Burney, who had been maid-in-waiting to the Queen of England and had written several novels, soon became infatuated with Madame de Staël. The guests wrote and composed together. In the evening they declaimed verses, and when, during the day, they went visiting in the neighbourhood, Narbonne, Talleyrand or Montmorency would seat himself on the box of a very unpretending vehicle drawn by one horse, and perhaps break the glass window in order to follow the conversation that was going on within. Miss Burney confessed that until the arrival of the French refugees she had had no idea of what conversation really meant. She was so taken with them, that, although she was over forty, she soon married one of them—General D'Arblay; they started housekeeping with no other fortune but what she derived from the sale of her novels and the hopes she placed in the manuscripts of other works she was preparing.<sup>1</sup>

It is very probable that before seeking a refuge in England, Louis de Narbonne had been there for his pleasure and instruction. At various periods, the dates of which I cannot give, as I have failed to discover any documentary information on the subject, he had travelled

<sup>1</sup> *Madame d'Arblay, Diary and Letters*, vol. v. p. 301—quoted by Lady Blennerhasset, vol. iii. p. 192.



FANNY BURNEY  
*From "Juniper Hall," by Constance Hill*





through a great part of Europe in order to complete the studies on history, common law and diplomacy, to which he had devoted himself at the University of Strasburg and in the Foreign Office at Versailles.<sup>1</sup> He spoke Italian which had been the language of his childhood, German, which he had spoken in his youth, and English, the language of a nation that interested him particularly, for it was the only European state, that possessed constitutional institutions. He was acquainted with several political characters of the United Kingdom, and on his arrival in London, although he was a poor and banished man, they met him with the same esteem as before, and perhaps with some curiosity at seeing a witness so well informed concerning the affairs of France. Up to this date the bulk of the English nation had appeared to follow, with interest and approval, the events that were taking place in our country. Having been through a Revolution that had brought peace, liberty and prosperity on their land, the English felt that it ill became them to blame their neighbours for taking the same measures in order to reach the same result. Besides, the conflagration that raged on the other side of the Channel, did not seem to threaten England, therefore they felt no need of wishing to extinguish it. It cannot even be said that the fall of the monarchy, on 10th August, was displeasing to the British government for, in the course of ages, the two nations had had many a bone to pick together, so there was every reason to hope that the relations might be better under the new form of government. The news of the September massacres somewhat modified these feelings which were those of the majority of the English people; then suddenly, London heard that Louis XVI. was to be arraigned by the Convention.

<sup>1</sup> Letter of Louis de Narbonne to the First Consul—quoted by Rambuteau—Villemain, *op. cit.*, p. 42.

Narbonne was utterly astounded, when the first rumour of the trial reached him. He called together his former colleagues, the Constitutionalist ministers who were in England, and proposed that they should all go together to the nearest port of France, and claim their share in the responsibility that was being thrust entirely on to the King. Bertrand de Molleville, in particular, and others who had formerly accused Narbonne with being tepid, considered his suggestion as very loyal, but too full of drawbacks. Then, in his own name, Narbonne requested the Commune to grant him a safe conduct to Paris, so that he might appear at the bar and answer for whatever had been done or planned during the three months of his ministry. The Convention refused his demand. Narbonne did not let himself be disheartened. He drew up the declaration which he had wished to make publicly, and had it printed in London and Paris, sending a copy to M. de Malesherbes, the King's defender, and to all the members of the Convention.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, he endeavoured to excite public opinion in England in favour of the King of France, or, at least, on behalf of the great, universal principles of liberty and justice that were about to be violated in the person of the unfortunate monarch. He even went so far as to ask for an audience with Pitt, in order to endeavour to touch him. The minister's icy reply is but too well known. "Under no consideration in the world can England expose herself to intercede in vain on such a subject and with such men." When, on being pressed by the whole of Europe, England at length joined the coalition against France, Pitt remembered Narbonne's attitude and expressed the wish to see him again in private. The interview took place

<sup>1</sup> Letter written by Narbonne to the First Consul (24th Dec. 1803), *Mémoires de Bertrand de Molleville*, vol. iii. p. 159; *Mémoires de Malouet*, vol. ii. p. 261; *Mémorial de Norvins*, vol. ii. p. 82, Villemain, *op. cit.*, pp. 45-50.

at the Prime Minister's country house. After having rapidly expressed the horror that he felt for the execution of Louis XVI. and Marie Antoinette, Pitt came to the point, and questioned the former French Minister concerning the condition of the country and its resources. In spite of his connection with several of the most important members of the Opposition, in the English Parliament, Narbonne was beginning to feel uncomfortable in a country where his own fatherland was constantly insulted and cursed, and he longed to withdraw. Thus, when Pitt began by telling him that for the safety of Europe and of society, the allies were determined to carry on a long and unmerciful war unless it were closed by the rising of the western and southern provinces or the defection of the military chiefs, Narbonne replied that it was perhaps rash to count on such an event, for a people fighting through a revolution could not be judged in the same way as another one and, in any case, the prospect of a deadly duel would incite them to a desperate resistance. Pitt having replied that all the French were gathered together in the camps, his opponent replied that it was indeed true, adding at the same time, that the horror inspired by the crime committed by the Convention might very well draw towards the frontier all the vital strength and generous feelings of the country, thus uniting under one banner all those whom the Coalition considered with the same hatred. This was a mere supposition and as such required no reply, so Pitt came back again to his point. According to his view, this war being neither more nor less than a crusade of Civilisation against Barbarism, everybody should take part in it, and he therefore requested the former minister of Louis XVI. to give him such information as might facilitate its success. Narbonne then made this haughty reply: "I am of no good for such work. To-day I know but one thing about France: the greatness of the peril

may make her unconquerable and, in spite of the tyranny she is now enduring under the name of Liberty, she holds passionately to the independence of her territory. As for the weak points in the land, the passages that are badly guarded, and the consciences that might be tempted, of these I know nothing. No one will betray to you the secret and the strength of France. This secret and this strength are everywhere. The threats of the foreigner counter-balance the excesses of the home government and beneath this hated authority you will discover a people devoted to their bleeding fatherland, which they will defend. I did too little during my short stay in office, but what I saw there and learnt will be sacred with me. Sir, as much as you, I hate the sanguinary policy of the committees of the Convention. I myself have nothing to expect from them but proscription and death. Nevertheless, I should consider myself a traitor and, indeed, I should be one, if, from my administration of the War Department and the recollections it has left me, I were to draw one word that could injure the military defence of my country. I prefer to be a refugee who will perhaps soon be driven from the land of exile as he has been cast out from his own fatherland." Pitt did not insist, but a few weeks later, Narbonne was ordered to leave England.<sup>1</sup>

After 10th August 1792, the Duchess de Narbonne had some right to hope that his own proscription and the defeat of his party would undeceive her son and bring him to Rome to make common cause with those who had been the first to emigrate. When she learnt that he had been driven from the country on whose good faith he had relied, hoping to find there liberal hospitality, did she again

<sup>1</sup> Villemain, *op. cit.*, pp. 44-45, Villemain had received the essential part of this answer from Narbonne's own lips. It is a pity that he should have fallen into the mistake of believing he was improving it, whereas he really spoilt it by adorning it with the flowers of rhetoric.

delude herself with the same hope? It seems very probable that she did. By joining the Coalition, England had provided the *émigrés* with fresh weapons against their country, and, it was not at such a moment, after having answered Pitt with such patriotism, that Louis de Narbonne would have dreamt of disowning his principles and his words by taking a share in the struggle against his fatherland. In December 1793, being provided with a false passport, he started for Switzerland, where Madame de Staël, Jaucourt, Mathieu de Montmorency and a few other friends had already preceded him. He appears to have gone first to Bienne and then successively to Berne, Thun<sup>1</sup> and Brienz, but he was unable to settle in any of these towns because the first *émigrés* had stirred up the federal authorities against him and they suspected him too much. He was thus wandering from one shelter to another when he met the Duke de Chartres who, on his father's death, was to become Duke of Orleans. Ruined and persecuted like the Count, he was trying to settle in some place in order to earn his living. If we are to believe a tradition, it is asserted that Narbonne was so struck by the ready and acute mind of the young prince, his clever and prudent conversation, that he did not hesitate to predict to him the very future which Danton had brutally prophesied to him on the day after Valmy.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> At Thun, Narbonne found Jaucourt to whom he was deeply attached by the conformity of their sentiments, taste and political opinions. Jaucourt, who was earning a few florins by keeping the accounts of a shopkeeper, had just married the divorced wife of Count de La Châtre. I do not need to retrace the romantic story of their love; it can be read in all the books of the time. On hearing of Narbonne's arrival in Thun and that her husband had invited him to dinner, the Countess ran off to the market, bought all the flowers she could find and filled the house with them, discovering eventually that she had not bought anything for the meal. Madame Scarron, who was less poetical, supplied the place of the missing roast by a tale.

<sup>2</sup> Villemain, p. 72.

After the death of her mother in May 1794, as Madame de Staël did not wish to disturb her father's grief with the lively company that generally surrounded her, she hired a large house in the lower part of Lausanne and established herself there, with a group of friends, the number of which was rapidly increased by all those whom the persecution had driven from France and scattered all over Switzerland. Amongst these were Madame Necker de Saussure and Madame Rilliet Huber, the most intimate friends of the mistress of the house; the Count and Countess de Jaucourt, Mathieu de Montmorency and his mother, the Viscountess de Laval whom Madame de Staël had saved with many others from the prisons of the Terror, but who was still bewailing the death of her younger son, Abbé de Laval, who had perished shortly before on the scaffold. Lullin de Chateaufvieux, the writer on husbandry, the brothers Pictet from Geneva, and the Swedish Count de Ribbing, one of Gustavus III's assassins, were amongst the guests of the Ambassadors. Finally we must mention Benjamin Constant, one of the last to arrive, who, after working with zeal to make up for lost time, was to succeed in the way everybody knows. Madame de Laval had never felt very tenderly towards Madame de Staël, and she never succeeded in overcoming this antipathy, although she and her son owed their lives to their hostess, who showered on the bereaved mother every consolation that she might expect.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> On 30th September 1794, Benjamin Constant writes thus to Madame de Charrière concerning the connection between Madame de Staël and Madame de Laval: "One sign that she is not merely a talking machine is to be found in the lively interest she takes in those she knew in former years, and who are now in trouble. For instance, at considerable monetary loss and at the cost of much personal trouble, she has only lately rescued a woman from Paris whom she used formerly to pursue with every possible indication of hatred" (*Blennerhasset*, vol. ii. p. 224). Baron de Barante who met Madame de Laval in 1801, says, "Among the many people she hated, Madame de Staël held the first place" (*Souvenirs*, vol. i. p. 89).

The origin of this resentment lay in a question of rivalry. Before the Revolution, although she was eight years older than Louis de Narbonne,<sup>1</sup> Madame de Laval had been one of the numerous victims whom this lady-killer had bound to his chariot. When she saw him arrive in his turn at Lausanne her jealousy awoke, and this woman who had hitherto appeared gentle, sad and unfortunate, suddenly took the attitude of an outraged mistress.<sup>2</sup> Benjamin Constant understood how much could be accomplished through this unexpected ally, and immediately united his efforts to hers in endeavouring to draw Narbonne away from Madame de Staël, in order to take his place himself. I will only recall

<sup>1</sup> Catherine Jeanne Tavernier de Boullongue, daughter of a treasurer of the special military service, was born in 1748. On 29th December 1765 she had married Mathieu Paul Louis de Montmorency Laval, younger brother of the Duke de Laval, who became colonel of the regiment of Auvergne, and eventually Major-General. Being infatuated with Frederick II. and the Prussian army, he fell into disgrace with Louis XVI. and threw himself into the Orleans party. Twenty years later, in Napoleon's name, he commanded the unattached troops of gendarmes in Germany. He was a man of loose morals. He died in 1809. Beugnot, who met him in 1789, devoted an ill-natured page to him in his memoirs (3rd edition, p. 89). Norvins, who served under him, has left a portrait that is a perfect caricature (*Mémorial* iii. pp. 136, 162-164, 171, 173, 176). His wife was over ninety when she died on 5th July 1838. When noting her death in his diary, Castellane says: "She outlived her friend Prince de Talleyrand by a few days only; for many years he went to her every evening when he was in Paris. Madame de Laval is one of the most amiable women I have ever met. She was my father's friend and had protected me ever since my childhood. Until the last moment she retained all the freshness of her mind, the charm of which gathered round her daily a small but excellent company. For a long time she dwelt in the same house as Count Louis de Narbonne. Madame de Laval was kind and witty. I never saw anything like the grace with which she would upbraid one. Her amiability was perfection. The Viscountess de Laval, who had been extremely pretty and gay in her youth, had become very pious during the last years of her life. Her only income consisted in a pension paid to her by her son, Duke Mathieu" (*Castellane*, i. p. 174).

<sup>2</sup> *Mémorial de Norvins*, vol. ii. p. 174.



Benjamin's sham suicide and his broken watch, in order to note the consequences of these too well-known Vaudeville scenes; they had all the success that he and his accomplice could wish for.<sup>1</sup> Following a communication which Madame Récamier is supposed to have made to him in 1835 concerning the rupture between Madame de Staël and Narbonne, Sainte Beuve forms the following brief opinion: "Monsieur de Narbonne behaved very badly towards her as men do only too often after they have been successful!"<sup>2</sup>

Madame de Staël's most copious biographer commenting on the critic's sentence, adds: "The man now closed what was a mere episode in his life with the same indifference as he had begun it. The woman who had loved him followed the direction of a forgiving nature, and still kept up an outward friendship, but she suffered a long time from the wound he had inflicted."<sup>3</sup> But these are empty words. The witty daughter of Jean Jacques Rousseau, the mother of the French Romantic School, was, nevertheless, a woman of the eighteenth century. In love affairs, as at the gaming-table, when well-bred people lost the game, they went away without slamming the doors. When she attached herself to the Count de Narbonne, Necker's daughter had no more idea of taking away his liberty than she would have suffered him to encroach on her own, and if, during their *liaison*, he courted several other women, she did not deprive herself of following her own caprices. To mention but one of them—Mathieu de Montmorency, the son of one of her rivals, had not always been, with regard to her, as "pious as he was fair." At this very moment, at Lausanne, whilst Narbonne was dwelling under her roof,

<sup>1</sup> *Mémorial de Norvins*, vol. ii. pp. 96-99. *Revue Internationale*, 10th January 1887. (Benjamin Constant's private diary, pp. 87-88.)

<sup>2</sup> *Causeries du lundi*, vol. xi. p. 493.

<sup>3</sup> Lady Blennerhasset, *Madame de Staël*, vol. ii. p. 213.

had she not become passionately enamoured of the handsome Swedish regicide, Ribbing? <sup>1</sup>

And again, in the presence of Narbonne, Ribbing and Mathieu, she fell in love with Benjamin Constant; "this strange personage, with his long spare body, was short-sighted and wore glasses, above which rose a mass of red hair. His mind and his body were in a perpetual state of agitation and he was afflicted with a tic and had many manias." <sup>2</sup> Of this Benjamin Constant, she had but lately said: "I know that this man would inspire me with a physical antipathy that nothing could make me overcome." <sup>3</sup> And yet he took possession of her and ruled her as no one had ever done before. Thus we see that in spite of Sainte Beuve, Madame Récamier and Lady Blennerhasset, the rupture between Madame de Staël and Count Louis took place without bloodshed, and she continued to live on the best of terms with him, Talleyrand and Mathieu, the three men whom she had loved best in her youth, as she says herself later on. <sup>4</sup> Moreover, it is remarkable that Sainte Beuve should have been so credulous as to believe that the *liaison* between Narbonne and Madame de Staël was purely a matter of sentiment. It was, indeed, made up of many other elements. They were both brilliant talkers and each of these two virtuosi of conversation wanted a partner worthy of his talent, and they served to carry each other along mutually. It was also a matter of vanity. Madame de Staël was, indeed, the daughter of one of the most important men of the time; she was herself a woman of rare and precocious wit, and had gathered around her the most eminent men of the court of France,

<sup>1</sup> P. Gautier, *Mathieu de Montmorency et Madame de Staël*, pp. 56-57.

<sup>2</sup> P. Gautier, *Mathieu de Montmorency et Madame de Staël*, p. 28.

<sup>3</sup> *Mémorial de Norvins*, vol. ii. p. 99.

<sup>4</sup> Letter to Baron de Gérando (8th October 1800) quoted by P. Gautier, *Mathieu de Montmorency et Madame de Staël*, p. 144.

of Europe and America, but it must not be forgotten that Madame Adélaïde's gentleman-in-waiting was adorned with every grace, that he was one of the most learned men of his time, the most polite, the most captivating—in a word, the most accomplished representative of that precious race—the French nobleman of the end of the eighteenth century. Nothing could be more flattering to them both than the union of their superiority. It is sometimes said that a passionate woman always has the same belief as her lover, or that he adopts her views; however this may be, it is certain that Madame de Staël and Narbonne were both passionately attached to politics and were equally fervent champions of the liberal ideas. They would have sacrificed everything to the Constitution of 1790; as a matter of fact, they defended it with all the passion of their souls, all the resources of their intellect, and this means far more than we can express. Madame de Staël was so imbued with Narbonne's ideas that, in her turn, she transmitted them unconsciously to others, without their seeming to know where they sprang from. "Who is this M. Benjamin Constant whose remarkable work I have just read?" wrote Talleyrand to her from Hamburg on 19th August 1796. "Is he connected with Narbonne? In his book I discovered many things which one would think they had thought out and written together. I even recognised some forms of Narbonne's reports and memorandums." However, since Robespierre's fall had put an end to the Terror, the Swedish Ambassadors, weary of Switzerland, for which she felt "a magnificent horror" and equally influenced by Constant, who was as unscrupulous in politics as in morals, longed to return to France and resume, with her new friend, the part that had been interrupted by that memorable day of 10th August 1792. She wrote her "*Réflexions sur la paix, adressées à M. Pitt et aux Français (Considerations on Peace addressed to Mr Pitt*

and to the French) in which she advised Europe to recognise the French Republic and urged the Constitutionalists to rally round it. This increased the misunderstanding between her and those about her, so that, as far as Narbonne was concerned, everything conspired to loosen their ties. But once again it must be said that these ties were broken without "éclat" or violence and that, far from making him responsible or guilty of this rupture, we should own that they both had their share in it. I will even go a step further. When, on 15th May 1795, we see Madame de Staël starting joyously on the road to Paris with Constant, whilst Narbonne remained in the land of exile, alone faithful to the cause for which they had suffered together, we shall, no doubt, have to own that, at this moment, she is not the one towards whom our sympathy goes.

After having had a final interview with her at Yverdun, Narbonne, Jaucourt and Montmorency had withdrawn to the small village of Gléresse, on the banks of Lake Bienné. It was not long before they learnt that, on her arrival in Paris, their friend had been denounced as having had a suspicious meeting with the *émigrés* before leaving Switzerland—this was their meeting at Yverdun. She sent a letter to the newspapers denying that this meeting had had anything to do with politics. At the same time she seized this occasion for professing publicly her new political opinions, and expressed the wish that the French Republic should establish itself "on the sacred basis of Justice and Humanity," declaring that it had been proved that "under present circumstances the republican form of government could alone give peace and liberty to France." The little colony at Gléresse was dismayed. Nevertheless, Narbonne who, as we have seen, was supposed to be indifferent towards his friend, took up her defence. He thought it quite natural, and even approved of Madame de Staël and all those who enter-

tained the idea of returning to France, separating themselves from his cause, as he himself had never wrangled over her emigration.<sup>1</sup> Finally, so that we may have no further doubt concerning the feelings he entertained towards the fugitive, it will suffice, I think, to produce another portion of a letter which he was to write to the First Consul on 24th December 1803, asking him to grant him some employment. Highly incensed against Madame de Staël, Bonaparte had just given the order for her to be banished. However, without fearing to draw the master's wrath on to his own head, Narbonne did not hesitate to remind him that, when he was arraigned a few days before the September massacres, she had helped him to flee, and, consequently, that he owed his life to the exiled lady, adding with his usual gallant daring, "The more she is in disgrace with the First Consul, the less, I am sure, he would forgive me for disowning feelings of gratitude and friendship." This is how Madame de Staël's former friend showed his indifference towards her.

Whereas most of those who had followed the same political course as he, were taking advantage of the calm that had followed on Robespierre's death and were hastening or preparing to go to France, Narbonne had less confidence in the benefits of the Constitution of the Year III., and persisted in remaining in exile. The staunchness with which he held to his convictions brought him a tribute of respect that he was far from expecting. One of the most sincere advocates of the Divine Right of Kings, one of the political writers who, in 1791, had criticised most severely the program of the Constitutional Royalists, Mallet du Pan, wrote to him in 1796 asking him for his opinion concerning the project of a declaration to be made by the Count d'Artois. This manifesto, which was to take the form of a letter, called

<sup>1</sup> Letter written by Mathieu de Montmorency to Madame Necker de Saussure, quoted by P. Gautier, *op. cit.*, p. 44.



MADAME DE STAËL.

*From an illustration in "Juniper Hall" by Constance Hill*



on all those who were in any way attached to the Monarchy to unite their divergent opinions in one single effort ; this meant adopting the principles that Narbonne had not ceased to preach, and which, as he himself said, he would never abandon no matter what mistakes were made in their name, no matter what suffering was to be endured in their defence. He replied : " I am a Royalist on principle, and I am attached to the Royal Family by ties that cannot be broken, therefore it would be a great joy for me were the Monarchy to follow the course mentioned in this letter ; this measure, however, seems to me to be tardy, and I almost doubt the genuineness of the counsel. This doubt being removed, I shall consider it a sacred duty to do my utmost for the success of a cause which, when it is supported with loyalty and straightforwardness, will at length comply with what an honest man owes to his country and to himself. For, in the present day, what situation is open to a man who wishes to obey his reason and his conscience ? You yourself, Monsieur, you who are so well suited to enlighten both, have you not been forced to displease all parties by telling them severe but useful truths ? If they would have listened to you, no doubt this letter of the Count d'Artois would have taken the place of a proclamation long ago. But I fear even now that the King will not adopt it." <sup>1</sup>

Feeling, with regard to the wisdom of the *émigrés*, as sceptical as he did concerning the duration of the Directorial government, Narbonne refused to share the views which Mallet du Pan had expounded to him. He even left the country that was so near to France and went to Germany, stopping, successively, in Suabia, on the banks of Lake Constance and in Saxony, where former friends and connections at Court procured him a kindly welcome.

<sup>1</sup> *Mémoires et correspondance de Mallet du Pan* (published by Sayous) vol. ii. p. 221.



He made use of his stay in Saxony to make himself familiar with the German language which he had learnt at Strasburg, and to study the classical authors that were taught there more learnedly than elsewhere. Later on he said : " There I found other winter quarters and another furlough, with this difference, that being older and poorer, I made all the better use of my time." He was living studiously in this far-off retreat when he was surprised by the *Coup d'État* of Brumaire. He understood at once that it was a great event that closed one chapter in the History of France and opened another. Hoping that a new period of activity was about to open before him, he shut up Tacitus and Cicero, and hastened to start on the road to his country.

## CHAPTER XIV

### NARBONNE AND TALLEYRAND

**L**OUIS DE NARBONNE'S stay in foreign lands had been much longer than that of his most intimate political friends, and certainly its duration had not been favourable to his interests. But he belonged to the very small group of those who loathe to make concessions, and, in spite of his impatience and the necessity for him for returning to France, he preferred to wait until he might cross the frontier, bearing his head high, and without being obliged to stoop down in order to know where to tread.<sup>1</sup>

This day seemed to have dawned when he heard of the fall of the Directory and the establishment of a new government beneath the glorious and powerful protection of General Bonaparte. He reached Paris towards the middle of the year 1800, and immediately set himself to work to have his name struck off the list of *émigrés*. His demand, which was supported by Talleyrand and Mathieu de Montmorency,<sup>2</sup> went through all the phases of the proceedings that were in use in such cases. Although

<sup>1</sup> On several occasions, after the 18th Fructidor, when the *émigrés* were being again pursued with renewed severity, Narbonne was said to be in hiding in various places in France and particularly in the Southern departments where, under the name of Braschi, he was making an active propaganda in favour of the Monarchy. This denunciation was as false as it was unlikely (*Arch. Nat. F<sup>7</sup>. 6141*).

<sup>2</sup> On 4th April 1800, Talleyrand signed a petition in his favour, and, on 25th of the same month, in his turn, Mathieu requested the Minister of the Police to hasten the examination of Narbonne's case (*Arch. Nat. F<sup>7</sup>. 5648*).

his flight had taken place before the 31st May 1793, the Commission proposed to apply to his case, the law of 22nd Prairial Year III., which had been made in order to include the Girondins in the amnesty. This measure was inspired by the fact that even before the Revolution, the claimant had been well-known for his liberal principles, and that, in 1790, he had rendered important services as Commander-in-chief of the National Guards of Doubs and Jura, as commissioner charged with the formation of the former department, as creator of the battalions of National Guards in 1791, as Minister of War, and finally, as one of Lafayette's generals. His emigration was vindicated by the fact that the warrant issued against him on 28th August 1792 had made it necessary for him to flee. The police added that, according to many sure witnesses in foreign lands, he had borne his misfortunes with resignation, and had not ceased to wish for the welfare of his country whilst waiting patiently for justice.

These considerations having been laid before the Consuls on 15th October 1800, Narbonne's name was struck off the list on the very same day. We must add that Fouché had helped him with a goodwill that might astonish us if we were unaware of the fact that the Minister of the Police—a former Oratorian—had been professor in the College at Juilly. He remembered, or someone reminded him, that the son of Madame Adélaïde's lady-in-waiting had been one of the most brilliant pupils of the establishment; this was the starting-point of the connection between the ex-Oratorian and Narbonne, of which we shall find several other traces.<sup>1</sup>

Narbonne had settled himself provisionally at Versailles. On 21st October, the Prefect of Seine-et-Oise was informed that his name had been struck out, and was requested to assist the Count in recovering whatever property

<sup>1</sup> Madelin : *Fouché* i. pp. 30, 279, 298, 411.

had not been alienated. It is even stated that he succeeded in recovering possessions that had been already sold. On 8th November, he took the oath to the Constitution. On 23rd, he sent in a request to the War Office asking for a half-pay pension "which as he had lost his fortune, had become absolutely necessary to him and his children." As in this request, he committed the error of styling himself Lieutenant-General—grade which he had refused—the military authorities let him wait. However, on 8th March 1801, the First Consul eventually granted him the half-pay pension due to this rank.<sup>1</sup> In the meanwhile, feeling sure that he would there find the soundest part of his unsold possessions, he had gained access to the "literary depository" of Versailles where the works seized in religious communities and the houses of the *émigrés* had been stored away. And, indeed, he discovered many books which had formerly belonged to him. Thus, on 31st December, the following works were restored to him: 115 works on theology; 34 on science and art; 70 on literature; 77 memoirs, letters and biographies; 109 dramatic and poetical works; 97 historical books; 22 on geography and travels. These books formed the true wealth of the learned man, who, during his studious life in foreign lands, had learnt more than ever to appreciate their value, and to them he might perhaps turn again for strength to bear other bad days. These volumes, however, were only a portion of the library once possessed by Madame Adélaïde's gentleman-in-waiting. Other books, which appear to have been the most valuable ones, had gone to "various destinations." Others had been erroneously included in foreign catalogues and finally were set apart as "gifts made to his family by the aunts of the last King of the

<sup>1</sup> *Arch. Nat.* BB<sup>3</sup>. 75 and 91; BB<sup>80</sup>. 148;—F<sup>7</sup>. 3831, 5648;—*Arch. of the War Office* (documents concerning Louis de Narbonne)—*Arch. of Seine-et-Oise*. Series 9. Narbonne documents.

French." He insisted in order to obtain also the restitution of the latter, which had a double value in his eyes, and thus succeeded in adding about 340 works to his collection.<sup>1</sup>

Whilst gathering together, here and there, the remnants of his fortune, whilst endeavouring to discover friends that belonged to the old Society and who had escaped death and exile, whilst seeking to make a place for himself in the new, Louis de Narbonne did not forget that his mother, his wife, and his eldest daughter were at Trieste. It seems probable that since the spring of 1791, he had only seen them once, at the time of Madame Adélaïde's death. On his return to France, taking advantage of Fouché's being so well disposed towards him, he took upon himself the responsibility of having his mother's name struck off the list of *émigrés*. No doubt the Duchess de Narbonne felt some surprise when she heard that since the 25th June 1801, her name was no longer on the list, and she was certainly still more amazed on learning that she had sworn fidelity to the Constitution on the following 9th September. She heard also that she had recovered possession of certain portions of her estates of La Bove and Juvincourt which had not been alienated, the value of which amounted to 110,000 francs.<sup>2</sup> With what remained to her from another source, and on which she was living, she was sure not to die of starvation in

<sup>1</sup> At the same time, Louis de Narbonne withdrew from the *Arch. of the Seine* such family papers as the authorities would consent to return to him, and which had been sequestered along with all his other property. He also claimed back several pictures—"Interior of a carpenter's shop," by Lépiciér; two small pictures by Lagrenée, junior; a Van Spaendonck representing flowers and a pine-apple; two paintings by Chardin, representing a woman and a child; a Virgin and the Infant Jesus by Mignard; a young girl caressing a dove, painted by Boucher; two small pictures by Boullongue (Madame de Laval's uncle), one being the Presentation in the Temple, the other the Flight into Egypt, *Arch. Nat.* T. 1653; *Arch. of Seine-et-Oise*. Series 9. Narbonne documents.

<sup>2</sup> Th. Courtaux. *Notice sur La Bove*, p. 73 to 76.

France. There was no longer any obstacle to her returning to her country, and yet, she could not make up her mind to do so. Thereupon, the Minister of War, having granted him four months' leave, Narbonne started for Trieste in June 1803.<sup>1</sup> Although we have no information concerning this family meeting, we may safely state that he urged his mother, his wife and his daughter to join him. But the Duchess had many reasons for refusing to consent. The devotion with which she had surrounded Madame Adélaïde during the forty years she had spent in her service, had transformed itself into a passionate worship of her memory. She was persuaded that her mission in life was now to watch over her ashes, and that this was a sort of continuation of her duty as lady-in-waiting. If she were to depart, who would come and kneel at the entrance of that lonely vault? Soon, who would even remember whose bones were buried there? If she returned to France, at every step, she would stumble over ruins and more tombs; it meant that at every moment, men and things would make her suffer intolerably. At Trieste, at least, the bitterness of her recollections was not increased by the continual contrast with the beings and places they reminded her of. Finally, although Count Louis had always been an affectionate son, he was certainly not an exemplary husband. On this subject, bad rumours were current, and, if he was to conduct himself badly, it was perhaps advisable, in order to maintain their friendly intercourse, that this should not take place before the eyes of his mother, of Countess Louise, nor before their daughter who was old enough to be married.<sup>2</sup> Such were the most apparent reasons

<sup>1</sup> *Arch. of the War Office* (Louis de Narbonne).

<sup>2</sup> It is evident that neither the Duchess, his mother, nor his wife, the Countess, had waited until the Consulate, to hear of Count Louis' infidelity. For a long time, they had known what to think about this subject. However, faithful to a conception of the mutual attitude of the husband and wife that was peculiar to society in the eighteenth century,

that prompted the Duchess to withstand her son's solicitations. When he returned to Paris, he was alone as when he left.

Although he had not been a member of the National Assembly of 1789, by his political opinions, Louis de Narbonne belonged to the majority of the Constitution-  
alists. He had, indeed, worked arduously to destroy the abuses and privileges of the Old Régime, but he had also fought no less energetically against anarchy. Towards the end of the year 1791, and at the beginning of 1792, whilst he was Minister of War, he had taken rapidly and with prompt decision the essential measures for driving back the invasion; to him, Revolutionary France owed its first three armies. By a warrant issued against him immediately after the 10th August, he had been forced to leave the country, not as a willing *émigré*—he had always been opposed to the emigration—but as a proscribed man whose one chance of safety was to flee. Thus, he not only belonged to that category of absent ones to whom the First Consul wished to throw open the frontiers, but by his opinions and his services, by his high culture and his connection with a Society that it was necessary to reconcile with the new France, he was one of those on whose help Bonaparte counted as being both clever and useful. Narbonne, who had been ruined by the Revolution in France and San Domingo, over head and ears in debt, was in need of employment in order to live. On the other hand, he loved public life to which he had long prepared himself. Therefore, we can readily understand that as soon as he was struck off the list of *émigrés*, he should have hastened to put

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it would seem that they had agreed amongst themselves to let their separation appear to be the result of circumstances rather than their own will. Here again no one was taken in by this arrangement, it was merely a last homage paid to the dignity of married life—like the incense which the last pagan priests offered up to the forsaken idols.

himself at the disposal of the First Consul. Nevertheless, Bonaparte would not have him. It was not merely out of inclination, nor as a political speculation that Narbonne adhered to the new order of things; his convictions were sincere. General Marbot, whose mother lived in Paris, in rue Miromesnil, in a house close to the one where the former minister of Louis XVI. dwelt after having left Versailles,<sup>1</sup> relates the following incident. On the day of the first distribution of the Legion of Honour, Narbonne, having heard that his footman, who had served during the expedition in Egypt, had been decorated, called him aside at dinner-time and said to him: "It is unbecoming that a knight of the Legion of Honour should hand round plates; it would be no less unseemly for him to take off his insignia in order to fulfil his service, therefore, I tell you to sit down beside me and we will dine together. To-morrow you shall go to my estate and occupy a situation as gamekeeper, which is not incompatible with wearing your ribbon."<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, in 1804, although Napoleon was informed of this trait, he declined Narbonne's services as he had already done in 1800.

To whose influence or to what circumstances are we to attribute his repulse?

When Narbonne returned from exile, he was not without friends in the government. No less than three ministers were at his disposal: Fouché, Chief of the Police, General Berthier at the War Office and Talleyrand in the Foreign Office. Although Narbonne made use of Fouché's obligingness in order to obtain his own reinstating and that of his near relatives, we doubt that he applied to him for employment. The positions that the Chief of the Police could dispose of were not likely to tempt him. Neverthe-

<sup>1</sup> Before accepting the shelter offered him by Madame de Laval in rue Roquépine, Louis de Narbonne lived at No. 1205 rue Miromesnil.

<sup>2</sup> *Mémoires du Général Marbot*, i. pp. 202-203.



less, if Fouché was called upon by the First Consul to give his opinion on Narbonne, it seems more than likely that he did so favourably. As for Berthier, we shall remember that he was in command of the National Guards of Seine-et-Oise when, in 1791, Louis XVI.'s aunts left Bellevue for Rome. We have seen that by showing tact, patience and firmness, he succeeded in preventing the castle and the carriages from being burnt and plundered by the Parisian mob. When at the end of the same year, 1791, Louis XVI. called Narbonne to the War Office, he chose Berthier as one of the chiefs of his staff. It has been proved that Berthier often acted as a medium between Narbonne and Bonaparte when the latter was First Consul, and later on, Emperor. It is even stated that, for a moment, he intended to ask for the hand of one of Narbonne's daughters. Certainly it was he who, with the help of Clarke, succeeded at length, in 1809, in chasing away the sort of evil spell that seemed to weigh on Narbonne. These facts being averred, I think no one will accuse Berthier of having secretly influenced Napoleon against the Count. We have still to deal with Talleyrand.

In their youth, Abbé de Périgord, the Count de Choiseul-Gouffier and the Chevalier de Narbonne, were three inseparable companions.<sup>1</sup> When Narbonne got married, the Count and the Abbé, who signed the contract, were the only witnesses who did not belong to either of the two families. Must we remind the reader that when Choiseul went as ambassador to Constantinople, Narbonne would have gone to St Petersburg, but that, at the eleventh hour, the Queen forced Louis XVI. to appoint Ségur to this post? Until 10th August 1792 Talleyrand and Narbonne had met in the same circles where, in different ways, they were both equally witty and brilliant; they shared the favour of the same women, belonged to

<sup>1</sup> *Journal du Gouverneur Morris* (published by Pariset), p. 365.



FOUCHÉ.

*L. J. J. J.*  
Portrait of Fouché, Duke of Otranto.

JOSEPH FOUCHÉ, DUKE OF OTRANTO



the same political circles and splintered lances for the same principles. After the fall of the monarchy they still appeared together for some time in England, beneath the hospitable roof of their mutual friend, Madame de Staël. Then they both went their way: the one to America, the other to Switzerland, and they did not meet again in Paris until after the 18th Brumaire of the Year VIII. No one knew Narbonne better than Talleyrand; he had been able to appreciate his integrity, his straightforwardness, his learning, his acuteness, his activity, and his firmness—formidable weapons in the hands of a man pressed by age and poverty—weapons the value of which the First Consul could not fail to recognize, when wielded by such a hand. It is not necessary to remind the reader how easily Talleyrand could make up his mind to an act of treachery. Even if we had no positive proof of the fact considering his character and the relations in which they stood to each other, we may safely conclude that Talleyrand was false to Narbonne. But we have other reasons for making such a statement. We have the testimony of contemporaries and the statements made by the parties concerned. When, in 1813, Baron Pasquier heard of Narbonne's death, he conceived the deepest regret.

In his *Memoirs* he says: "His loss was the more keenly felt because he was one of the few who, when treating with the Emperor concerning the highest political questions, did not fear to tell him the truth and even considered it a duty to do so. The dexterity of his mind supplied him with the same means that M. de Caulaincourt drew from the firmness of his character. Nevertheless, his cleverness did not save him from paying the penalty of his frankness. When the negotiations at Prague were broken off, Napoleon was anxious to dismiss a witness who was too clear-sighted and who disapproved of his conduct, he therefore sent him to take

command of the citadel of Torgau on the Elbe. The garrison of this stronghold was soon attacked by a malady that M. de Narbonne caught whilst taking care of the unfortunate soldiers that were crowded into the hospitals. In 1792, during the Legislative Assembly, Monsieur de Narbonne was for a short time Minister of War to Louis XVI. In his youth he had reaped the most brilliant successes at Court. The manners of this period had stamped him with an appearance of levity, according to which too many people persisted in judging him. He was possessed of a shrewdness and a soundness that would have enabled him to treat the most important affairs, but that, through his long exile, he was kept in the background for so many years. *The anxiety which M. de Talleyrand felt on his return, and the trouble he gave himself for a long time in order to prevent his getting near to the Emperor, is the best proof of what I advance."*<sup>1</sup>

Pasquier had known Narbonne personally.<sup>2</sup> By the important position which he had occupied during the Empire, by his connection with all the great personages of society and of the political world of the day, he was able to acquire the best information, therefore his word has great weight. However, in spite of the value we set on his testimony, as good critics we must not forget that the Chancellor despised Talleyrand.<sup>3</sup> This consideration would be of a nature to diminish the value of Pasquier's judgment of Talleyrand, but that it is corroborated by others. Without stopping to listen to the secondary witnesses whose testimony support Pasquier's opinion, let us turn to the most important party interested—to

<sup>1</sup> *Mémoires du Chancelier Pasquier*, vol. iii. pp. 101-102.

<sup>2</sup> *Mémoires du Chancelier Pasquier*, vol. i. p. 253, note 4.

<sup>3</sup> *Mémoires du Chancelier Pasquier*, i. p. 246. It will be remembered that in November 1816, in the house of the British Ambassador, Prince de Talleyrand made a public scene about the policy of Pasquier, who was then President of the Chamber. The King was so shocked that he forbade the Prince to appear at the Tuileries.

Napoleon himself. Eleven years after Narbonne's return to France, when the Emperor had decided to take him as aide-de-camp, he said to him one day: "How is it that instead of helping you, your old friend Talleyrand, who knew your worth, *has always dissuaded me from employing you?* I believe that he really feared you! He knew how well your character would suit me, and that to thrive in my confidence means to share in my fortunes." When relating this remark, Count de Rambuteau, Narbonne's son-in-law adds: "It is well-known that M. de Talleyrand was not arduously affectionate, and that his philosophy enabled him to support without bitterness his friends' misfortunes. He made himself pretty easy concerning their adversity. 'Narbonne,' said he, 'is always chivalrous; he has nothing; he does not wish for anything, he needs nothing. He loves study. Books, friends—that is all he wants. One must not worry one's self about him, for he does not suffer nor worry himself. . . . He has more wit than I, he said lately, —one hundred times more! Perhaps! but he is not as wise as I. . . . During the Legislative Assembly he was accused of being flighty; this idle tattle is the way dull-witted people make reprisals. In reality, his conversation alone is light, and that is charming. Withal, he is very serious—much too serious indeed. He becomes attached, he grows passionate, he has too much zeal. If he were to take office again he would devote himself beyond all measure, at a moment when people are only too much inclined to do so to excess. Believe me, that is good for nothing!'"<sup>1</sup>

This is how Talleyrand affected to speak of Narbonne when in presence of people who might have pleaded his cause with the master. His attitude was false, perfidious and hypocritical. \*

<sup>1</sup> Talleyrand's remarks on Narbonne are related both by Rambuteau *Mémoires* (p. 43 and note) and by Villemain (*op. cit.* pp. 63-94).

We may be easily convinced that he was hypocritical by opening his *Memoirs* at the page where he speaks of Narbonne. There we shall see the difference that really existed between the feelings which he professed towards his old friend and those which he entertained in reality. "Although Society has often coupled together the names of M. de Choiseul (Gouffier), M. de Narbonne and Abbé de Périgord, our relation with M. de Narbonne did not bear the stamp of friendship. M. de Narbonne's style of wit aims at effect, it is brilliant or worthless, it exhausts itself in a billet-doux or a witticism. His manners are not tempered; his gaiety often sacrifices good taste and his character does not inspire the confidence that is necessary for intimate intercourse. One felt more pleasure in his company than ease. He had great success, especially with witty men that were inclined to be slightly vulgar, because of the charm which he knew—better than anyone else—how to spread over companionship. He was less successful with men who valued what in our youth was called *bonton* (good breeding). If one were enumerating the men who had supped on such a day at the house of the Maréchale de Luxembourg, if he had been there, twenty names would have been presented before his—but at Julie's he would be mentioned first." <sup>1</sup>

However, Talleyrand sought after this man whom he considered of no worth, ill-bred, vulgar and out of place in good society. He sang his praises everywhere except, of course, in the Cabinet of Saint Cloud; he showed himself affectionate and very amiable towards him, inviting him to his entertainments and boasting of him before the celebrated foreigners who flocked to Paris after the Peace of Lunéville and of Amiens.<sup>2</sup>

If we reflect, however, we shall understand what

<sup>1</sup> *Mémoires du Prince de Talleyrand*, vol. i. pp. 35-36.

<sup>2</sup> Villemain: *op. cit.*, p. 94.

motives dictated this portrait. When Narbonne at length gained the Emperor's favour, he worked with all his might to make up for lost time by serving him with a loyalty and a fidelity that were all the more praiseworthy as he was at last undeceived. As a reward for his devotedness, he fell half into disgrace and was sent to a far-off foreign fortress where he died, obscurely and unnoticed, before his time. In the meanwhile, overwhelmed by Napoleon with riches and honours, the Prince of Benevento was betraying him as we know. We may, therefore, readily understand that when he reached this passage in his *Memoirs*, the image of Narbonne seemed to rise and reprove him for his treason, and then his base soul sought relief by dragging down to his own level the "chivalrous soul" of his former friend. And then . . . then . . . if I were to express my thoughts fully, I should not be surprised if this cruel page were a posthumous act of revenge for private injuries. As every one knows, Talleyrand had a cloven foot. He did not content himself with spending all his evenings giving witty repartees to the Maréchale de Luxembourg. He also went to "Julie's," and oftener than he cared to he would cross Narbonne on the staircase. Again, in 1808, he contended with him for the favour of his former friend the Viscountess de Laval.<sup>1</sup>

I have already said that the praises which Talleyrand showered on Narbonne during the Consulate were not only hypocritical but also delusive. No one had known better Madame Adélaïde's gentleman-in-waiting before the emigration, and, in the present emergency, no one was better informed of his wants and his aspirations. The editor of Rambuteau's *Memoirs* has reproduced a long letter which Narbonne at length wrote to Napoleon on 24th December 1803, when it had become evident to him that he would never be able to reach

<sup>1</sup> Rambuteau, *op. cit.*, p. 26. Governor Morris, *op. cit.*, pp. 365-366.



Bonaparte and lay before him his misery, his claims and his desires. We have already borrowed several passages from this epistle; the following lines contain crushing evidence against Talleyrand. "I owe to the First Consul the privilege of still being a Frenchman, and my first wish would have been to prove to him my gratitude and my devotedness. I therefore aspired to having the honour and the small merit of giving to those who were in the same straits as myself, the example of making themselves actively useful by attaching themselves firmly to the government to which we owe everything, and from whom alone everything is to be expected. *Not one of the requests which M. de Talleyrand, my intimate friend for the last thirty years, has taken the pains to present to the First Consul, in order to secure for me a post in the army, in the government, or in the diplomatic corps, has been granted.*"

Since his friend had made these bitter disclosures to him, Talleyrand was telling a deliberate lie when he wrote these words: "He does not wish for anything; he needs nothing; one must not worry one's self about him for he does not suffer nor worry himself." <sup>1</sup>

It must be owned that in playing this double game Talleyrand showed consummate skill and rare perfidiousness. Although Narbonne possessed most of the qualities that go to make a good statesman, he had one grave fault that he never managed to get rid of. Talleyrand was well aware of this break in his cuirass and eagerly guided towards the vulnerable spot, the hands of those who could wound him. "Narbonne is always chivalrous!" he was fond of saying on all occasions, and, as we may imagine, this compliment, which he deserved so well by his fidelity to Madame de Staël in disgrace, was not likely to plead in

<sup>1</sup> Rambuteau, pp. 34-39.

his favour with such a cold politician as the First Consul.<sup>1</sup>

This fear of Narbonne pursued Talleyrand even during the Empire.<sup>2</sup> As long as he was able to keep this possible rival at a distance, he not only never missed an occasion to injure him in Napoleon's mind, but even sought to raise up difficulties. The Lauderdale affair was perhaps his last attempt, but it was also his masterstroke. When, in January 1806, Pitt, the great English statesman died,

<sup>1</sup> We have seen with what words he had dared to speak of her to the First Consul when the latter was most incensed against her. If we are to believe the account of one of Joséphine's ladies-in-waiting, inserted in the *Memoirs of Constant*, the Emperor's valet de chambre, Narbonne remained in correspondence with the exiled lady—a circumstance which the police did not fail to discover. This is what she relates: "Joséphine has just told me a rather curious anecdote. Lately, Madame de Staël wrote to Count Louis de Narbonne. As she was sending the letter by a man on whom she thought she could depend, she had hidden none of her thoughts; she made merry in particular over persons who have accepted places at Court since the creation of the Empire. She added that she hoped she would never have the grief of reading her name next theirs in the newspapers. The bearer of the letter took it to Fouché. After having rewarded this villainy, Fouché read the letter, copied it, and having closed it with care, said to the man: 'Fulfil your errand. Get M. de Narbonne's reply and bring it to me.' This he did not fail to do. The Count replied in the same tone. It is said that he does not spare us in his reply. I forgive him with all my heart. I am myself constantly tempted to laugh at the strange body we form." (*Constant*, published by Garnier, vol. i. pp. 283-284.) Is there any truth in this story that contains many improbable details? And if true, what use did Fouché make of Narbonne's letter? The many police documents concerning Madame de Staël which are kept in the *Arch. Nat.* give us no information, for they do not say one word concerning the anecdote related by Constant.

<sup>2</sup> And after Napoleon's fall. His friend was dead but his memory importuned him. In 1814 Viscount Joseph de Narbonne, a cousin of Count Louis, solicited the King to grant him an embassy or the peerage. "On the occasion of the first nomination of peers" he relates himself: "M. de Narbonne was placed on the list by M. le Chevalier Dambray, Keeper of the Seals, who was charged with the presentation. Circumstances put this list into M. de Talleyrand's hands and he struck off M. de Narbonne's name without the latter being able to find out why." *Arch. Nat.*, BB<sup>90</sup>, 253.

Fox was appointed to succeed him in directing the foreign policy of Great Britain, and he sent Lord Lauderdale to Paris with the mission of finding a basis for negotiating peace. Fox was not deceived, nevertheless it well became him and his past career to run this venture. But after the Battle of Trafalgar, England was just as little inclined to bow down before Napoleon and his enterprising designs, as the conqueror of Austerlitz was disposed to come to terms with the one single nation of all those leagued against him, which he had as yet failed to bring low. Talleyrand, who did not care to draw down on his own head the Emperor's wrath if, as was very possible, the negotiations failed, refused to listen to Fox's envoy and kindly referred him to Narbonne;<sup>1</sup> thus if the negotiations were broken off, the latter would have all the responsibility on his shoulders. Fox's death, which took place only seven months after that of his predecessor, put an end to this attempt at unofficial diplomacy, and, moreover, favoured Talleyrand's little game. What he had foreseen took place. Instead of being grateful to Narbonne for his good services, the Emperor, who hated to be repulsed in a negotiation as much as on the battlefield, became so incensed that he ordered Fouché to exile him forty leagues from Paris.<sup>2</sup> This was Talleyrand's

<sup>1</sup> Narbonne had met Fox in England and they had continued to correspond with each other when the Count was in Switzerland and in Germany. During the Consulate, at the time of the English statesman's journey in France, they had often met and conversed together. Narbonne had such a high opinion of Fox that he once said to his younger daughter: "If I had died before getting you married, I would have bequeathed you to Fox who, I am sure, would have shown himself worthy of my confidence by accepting this legacy." (Rambuteau, p. 42.)

<sup>2</sup> But Fouché, whom Narbonne had taken care to inform of his interviews with Lauderdale, declared to the Emperor that the French negotiator had fulfilled his task with skill and zeal and that the events and the change in the English Cabinet were alone responsible for his failure. *Correspondance de Napoléon I*, xiii. p. 87. Villemain, pp. 107-110: Rambuteau, p. 42.

method when dealing with his former friend. Could anything be more touching than to appear to oblige him by giving him a chance of winning distinction? But to furnish him with tools that he knew to be defective and which, if they broke, must maim him, this, I say once more, was real art—pure machiavelism.

By a coincidence that would appear strange to those who might not be in the secret, the barrier between the Emperor and Narbonne fell on the day when Napoleon removed Talleyrand from the Foreign Office, and, by confining him to the merely honorary functions of Vice-Grand Elector, dismissed him from his person and his Council. It is no less remarkable that from the moment Narbonne was able to approach Napoleon, he acquired an extraordinary ascendancy over the latter, as we shall soon see. It was therefore not without good reason that Talleyrand had tried to keep them apart. Narbonne missed his own career and perhaps he was wanting to Napoleon's. This is one more piece of treachery to be put down to the Prince of Benevento; his action was all the more hateful because Narbonne had been his friend; it was all the more guilty because Narbonne possessed light and strength that could be useful to his country.<sup>1</sup>

In fine, Narbonne's creditors were those who suffered most from this sort of ostracism, for, as he had no employ-

<sup>1</sup> Golovkine, who could not forgive Narbonne for offering his services to Napoleon, lays all the blame on him in this circumstance as in many others. According to his statements, Talleyrand is supposed to have refused to help him because he considered his ideas too old-fashioned and that he was not as proud as a man of his condition should be. "M. de Narbonne," says he, "complained bitterly and offended the one from whose influence he expected everything. As his ambition was confined to a sub-prefecture or some such modest position, M. de Talleyrand was quite justified in deeming it impossible for him to consent to or contribute to his former friend thus degrading himself." (*Portraits et Souvenirs*, p. 313.) Even if these assertions were not purely fictitious, they would prove once more—and that has been our only aim—how great was Talleyrand's ill will.

ment and consequently no fixed salary, it was almost impossible for him to pay his debts. He himself was resigned, for, during his exile, he had learnt how to beguile with study his longing for action, and to content himself with few worldly goods. With the Viscountess de Laval, from whom he never again separated, he shared an unpretending pavilion in rue Roquépine. Here, in a small but select company and amongst his books—his other friends—he felt once more some of those joys that he prized most in life.<sup>1</sup> After having removed his daughter from the hands of Mesdames' former servant who had taken care of her, he put her to school and watched over

<sup>1</sup> Count de Rambuteau who was admitted into this small society in 1808, has left us a description which I beg to be allowed to transcribe : " M. de Narbonne was then sharing with Madame de Laval, his intimate friend, a small pavilion in rue Roquépine where she gathered together every evening some of the celebrities of the day : MM. de Talleyrand, de Choiseul-Gouffier, de Jaucourt, Count de La Marck (Mirabeau's friend); Count de Clary, son-in-law to the Prince de Ligne, Prince Poniatowsky, Duke de Laval, Adrien de Montmorency. . . Mesdames de Choiseul, de Jaucourt, de La Tour du Pin, de Vicence, de Bauffremont de Coigny, de Balbi, de Souza, etc. The company was not numerous and generally excluded young men of my age ; this made me feel very flattered by the honour of being admitted into their circle and studying the world at this school of fine manners, traditions and recollections. The past was not the only topic ; a great number of the guests had rallied round the Emperor, but this did not affect the ties of blood and friendship. On the contrary, lively and courteous discussions added another charm to these conversations, the animation of which was in no way lessened by the exquisite politeness of the talkers. During a whole year I met there the Duchess de Fitz-James sinking beneath an incurable disease, while those I have named sought to make her forget her suffering by surrounding her with care, kind attentions and affectionate eagerness, with all the winning grace of the past century—a frivolous century indeed—a witty century but also one that was full of love and fidelity. From 1808 to 1813 I went there every day ; sometimes I brought my little quota of news ; otherwise I slipped behind the armchairs and listened to the tales about the old Court, to M. de Choiseul's anecdotes, to M. de Narbonne's repartees, to M. de Talleyrand's sallies. He still had an ascendancy over Madame de Laval—This made me say to M. de Narbonne : " Pardieu ! In your play he acts the lover and you the husband ! " (Rambuteau, pp. 24-26.)



TALLEYRAND



her with tender solicitude whilst his mother and his wife undertook to educate the other child. In 1806, through the medium of Madame de Souza, one of his former friends, he married his eldest daughter to Count de Braamcamp de Sobral, a Portuguese nobleman, who was to play an important political part in his own country. The wedding took place at Agen. Whilst Countess Louis conducted the bride to this town, the Count arrived there with the other sister, so that, after a separation of fifteen years, the mother saw once more her younger daughter whom she had left a little child in arms, and the two sisters who did not know each other, were at length united. In the same year the old Duke de Narbonne died at the age of eighty-five. As we have already mentioned, he had remained at Agen, living with the Viscount, his elder son, whose name had been struck off the list of *émigrés* on 15th October 1800, through Count Louis' influence. On 12th August he died peacefully in his mansion situated in rue Porte Neuve. On the eve of his death, however, he had had time to make a will, the principal clauses of which we will note. He mentioned his wife only to confirm—"in so far as necessary,"—the advantages granted to her in their marriage settlement. Then he divided his property into three parts—one for his elder one, the second for the younger one, and the third, under form of a disposable share, to his granddaughter, Marie-Adélaïde, who was not yet married. In order the better to protect this legacy bequeathed to the young girl, he put it under the guard of a special executor, Count de Bastard, his relation, forbidding Count Louis to use the revenues of the sum as he was entitled to in virtue of his paternal authority, and even applying this prohibition to the mother of the legatee. We might be inclined to consider this precaution as a mark of distrust towards his son and his daughter-in-law. But such an explanation can scarcely apply to the latter.



I am, therefore, rather inclined to believe that, as the aged Duke knew that his children were pursued by their creditors, he was anxious to prevent the latter from seizing the income of the legacy bequeathed to his grandchild who was still a minor.<sup>1</sup> After her eldest daughter's marriage, Countess Louis de Narbonne and the younger girl settled at Agen, living with her brother-in-law and his wife the Viscount and the Viscountess who had no children. Two years later, in the spring of 1808, Adélaïde de Narbonne was wedded here to the young Count de Rambuteau, who long before his marriage had conceived the deepest admiration and a sort of filial worship for his future father-in-law—feelings that echo through the very first pages of his *Memoirs*. When these great family duties were accomplished, Count Louis started again for Paris. He entered into his simple apartment on the ground floor, where the walls were all lined with books, and plunged once more into his studies. They had charmed his youth and they were his great resource during these later idle days.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> I am indebted to M. Bonnat, keeper of the records of Lot-et-Garonne, for communicating to me the Duke de Narbonne's will.

<sup>2</sup> Narbonne's mind had been fashioned by the Old Régime, but his ideas were essentially modern and, although he was devoted to the classics, he was keen on every new discovery in science. Amongst other subjects, he was much interested in the system of Gall, the phrenologist, whom he may have met at Strasburg, where this learned man had been made doctor in 1785. With Talleyrand, Choiseul, Béranger, Laborde, Cuvier, the Duchess de Lévis and others, he had attended most assiduously the lectures on cranioscopy which Gall had commenced in Paris in 1807.

## CHAPTER XV

### COUNT DE NARBONNE ENTERS THE EMPEROR'S SERVICE

**N**APOLEON'S wrath had been so great that the failure of the Lauderdale negotiations seemed to have deprived Narbonne, who was getting old, of the last chance of his services being accepted. Without having absolutely given up all hope, it is probable he scarcely expected any favourable stroke of fortune, when suddenly, on the 15th of May 1809, the Emperor, who was far away in Austria, called him into active service and summoned him to join him immediately. I believe no one has given an explanation of this unexpected incident, and it would remain incomprehensible if we had not the curiosity to go and see what had taken place behind the scenes. On the 1st of May, General Clarke, Minister of War, had written to the Emperor proposing Narbonne as Governor of a conquered province. On the 13th inst. the Emperor sent Clarke's letter to Berthier, asking him for his opinion. On the same day, vouching for Narbonne's loyalty, Berthier added that the latter had often expressed his desire to serve the Emperor.<sup>1</sup> It does not surprise us that Berthier should have spoken in favour of his former superior, nor that his testimony should have convinced Napoleon. But how are we to account for Clarke's intervention? On the 18th of April of the preceding year, Henriette Clarke, the General's daughter, had married Raymond - Alméry - Philippe - Joseph,

<sup>1</sup> Administrative Archives of the War Office. Documents concerning Louis de Narbonne.

Viscount de Montesquiou Fezensac, grand-nephew of the Duke de Narbonne-Lara, and, consequently second cousin to Count Louis. This union had brought together M. de Narbonne and the young bride's father, and in all likelihood to this circumstance we must attribute the fact that the Minister of War undertook to reconcile the Emperor with his son-in-law's uncle.

Narbonne resumed active service with the rank of Brigadier-General, and, leaving Paris immediately, reached the headquarters of the army between the Battles of Essling and Wagram. Could such an impetuous man as he, the soldier who had been fretting over this long period of inaction, have wished for a more glorious moment to reappear on the scene of public life? He arrived just as the armies of Italy and Illyria, being recalled to reinforce that of Germany gathered around Vienna, were marching all through the south-west of Austria, driving before them the Archduke John, who was defeated on 14th June at the Battle of Raab. The Emperor immediately raised him to the rank of General.<sup>1</sup> and gave him the command of this city and the whole portion of Hungary occupied by our troops (24th June). His military mission was, in reality, a political one. Count de Rambuteau says: "There M. de Narbonne soon discovered the existence of a great movement, the aim of which was to separate Austria from Hungary and to make the latter independent by granting her her own sovereign. The choice lay between three competitors: Esterhazy, Pakfy, and another whose name I have for-

<sup>1</sup> "Count Louis de Narbonne joined the army on 19th of June," says Castellane. "He was then General. The Emperor wished at first to employ him as Brigadier-General; but Prince de Neufchatel, who had been under him in the War Office when he was Minister, obtained that he should serve in his own grade." (*Journal*, i. p. 60.) We have already seen that after his Ministry the Legislative Assembly had named Narbonne Lieutenant-General, but that he had refused this rank.

gotten. But during one of his frequent journeys to Raab, General de Bubna got wind of the conspiracy and, as in her turn, Bohemia showed herself disposed to form likewise a separate State with the Archduke Charles as King, peace was signed precipitately. M. de Narbonne was obliged to preach obedience and resignation to those whom he had urged on to become secessionists." <sup>1</sup> The Treaty of Vienna put an end to Narbonne's mission at Raab. He was then sent to Trieste as chief of the fourth military division under Marshal Marmont, governor of the Illyrian provinces. Had he asked for this post? It seems likely, if we remember that his mother had not left Trieste since she had sought a shelter there with the daughters of Louis XV. in 1799. The young Duke Victor de Broglie, who spent some time in this town as secretary to the Duke de Raguse, has drawn a touching picture of the sort of life the Duchess led and of her meeting with her son. "At Trieste," says he, "M. de Narbonne met his mother, the Duchess de Narbonne, who, having left France with Mesdames Royales, had been their devoted companion in the land of exile, and who, when she could no longer devote herself to their misfortune, still remained faithful to their memory. She was a great lady and possessed an exalted soul. No one has ever made such an impression on me as she. Never have I seen a being so imposing, so proud and yet so gentle. She lived upon little and in absolute solitude, refusing to receive any stranger, any inhabitant of Trieste—in a word, anyone who had not approached *Mesdames Royales* or been in their service. She even kept at a distance those to whom her door was not closed—treating her son in this way. She admitted me only by way of exception. Her equanimity was admirable; she never uttered a word of complaint or recrimination, and never referred to the past. She had the bearing of a Queen

<sup>1</sup> Rambuteau, pp. 39-40.

weeping over her husband, without giving a thought to the loss of the supreme rank."<sup>1</sup> As we know, Count Louis was deeply attached to his mother, and he must have suffered at seeing her, at her age, persist in shutting herself up in this sullen and far-off solitude. Many times he had tried to draw her from Trieste, and, as we shall remember, in June 1803, he had gone on purpose to this city in order to persuade her to come back to France. Since his return to active service, it was more than probable that the Emperor would send him on missions and expeditions that would prevent him from watching over her interests in France as before, and this might compromise the small income on which she lived. The Duchess was then seventy-six years of age. If she were to fall ill, she could scarcely depend on his assistance, and that of her elder son might reach her too late, because he was so far away, and he would be of little use to her on account of his deafness. On the other hand, one of the chief reasons for her remaining in exile had ceased to exist, as the French Empire, heir to the Republic from which she had fled in former days, now stretched to Trieste and far beyond. Besides, could she not honour Madame Adélaïde's memory anywhere but in a town where the Princess had dwelt only a short time, and in no other way but by rendering a fruitless homage to her ashes? With more persistence than ever, Count Louis besought his mother to draw nearer to her children. The Duchess began to relent. She was becoming resigned to many things. However, her memory was still so full of the respect and kindness with which Pius VI. had surrounded the daughter of Louis XV., during their long stay in Rome, that she could not easily forgive the Emperor for treating so harshly the successor of this Pontiff, who, by his command, was kept a prisoner in Savonna: "Beware my son!" said she, "this is more

<sup>1</sup> *Souvenirs du duc de Broglie*, vol. i. p. 93.

terrible than the civil constitution of the clergy, worse than the masses said by the priests who accepted to take the oath. The Vicar of Christ, the chief of all the faithful, is a captive. He has been dragged from his Church like a malefactor—he is kept in close confinement within this stronghold, without tidings of his priests or of Christendom, his kingdom. He is ill with sorrow and fatigue. To all these sins against the Holy Ghost, the vice of ingratitude is added, for the Prince who thus persecutes the Holy Father is the one for whose sake he went to Paris to consecrate him with his own hands. Indeed, my dear son, the whole world resounds with one cry of sorrow and, from all sides, one prayer is sent up towards God. Even the heretics are indignant at these acts of violence. Some of our Italians, who went recently to London to assist at the funeral of Her late Majesty the Queen of France,<sup>1</sup> told me that the Anglicans are most indignant about the Holy Father's oppression, and that, at the Catholic Chapel, innumerable conversions take place. Think of this, my dear son. When the Temple had been forced open, and the Pontiff dragged out by the hair of his head, God avenged himself on Antiochus, Heliodorus and on all their tools." Although Narbonne was a strong-minded man, and must have smiled at the antiquated form by which his mother expressed her grievances, yet he could not refrain from owning that she was right, for the justness of his mind made him feel that Napoleon had committed a great mistake in fighting against the Pope. Later on he said: "In governing, nothing is worse than to shock honest people's souls. In order to be able to hold out a long time, one must have them on one's side and be upheld by the human conscience. This the Emperor had accomplished with genius in the Concordat, and now, unfortunately, he is working to

<sup>1</sup> Marie-Josephe-Louise de Savoie, Countess de Provence, died on the 13th November 1810.

destroy it."<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, the Emperor, who was informed of everything, and who disliked equally the rebuke implied by silence or voluntary exile, closed his eyes on the harmless blame of Madame Adélaïde's former lady-in-waiting. He did more. Following the recommendation of Louis de Narbonne, he granted a pension to some Italian artists whom, according to her means, the Duchess continued to provide with certain sums which the daughters of Louis XV. had formerly bestowed on them. This kind attention quite disarmed the old lady, who allowed herself to be brought back to France. She seems to have intended to settle at Agen where her eldest son and her two daughters-in-law dwelt. We meet her there in 1811. But she only remained there for two months, and then, under pretence that the air of Agen did not agree with her, started for Lyons,<sup>2</sup> wishing, no doubt, to join her grandchild, the Countess de Rambuteau, whose husband had estates in the neighbourhood of Macon. Finally, she settled in Paris, which she was never to leave again.

Even before his mother had taken any decision, Count Louis had been obliged to leave Trieste for Munich. On 30th of January 1810, the Emperor had named him Minister of France in Bavaria, at the special request of the King, a former companion of Narbonne. Maximilian of Bavaria had, indeed, been in the service of the King of France before the Revolution, and he had kept garrison at Strasburg, where a friendship had sprung up between them. Count de Rambuteau tells us that on his way to Bavaria, his father-in-law spent a few days in Vienna. "His old friend, the Prince de Ligne, took advantage of the occasion, and invited him to dine with Count de la Marck and M. de Metternich. In this tête

<sup>1</sup> Villemain, pp. 121-123.

<sup>2</sup> Communicated by M. Bonnat, Keeper of the Archives of Lot-et-Garonne.

à tête, the clever diplomatist questioned him much about the last treaty (that of Vienna after Wagram), the Hungarian agitation, the secessionist movement in Hungary and Bohemia, and on the intrigues in which he had taken a part. Without denying or confirming these reports, M. de Narbonne seized this occasion for insisting on the necessity of closer union with France, and said to him: 'You have had a narrow escape, but you are too clear-sighted not to see that this peace is merely a truce. During the first war you will be either crushed or divided. Now France can go but with you or with Russia. The divorce has just been granted (15th December 1809). The Emperor must think of his dynasty. He has the choice of an Archduchess or a Grand-duchess. The future, and the very existence of Austria depend on this decision.' " On the following day, he was requested to go to the Palace, where the Emperor Francis received him with great kindness, and, referring to the conversation of the preceding evening, said that he shared his views, and then urged him to write to Paris and inform the government that he was favourably disposed to this alliance. M. de Narbonne preferred to send his letter to Fouché rather than to Talleyrand of whom he was not "so very sure!"<sup>1</sup> The idea of a marriage between Marie Louise and Napoleon was not a new one. Since 1803, it had haunted Austria. In 1805 it was thought of once more. Thugut, Bubna, Metternich, Schwarzenberg, made it the pivot of their political and diplomatic combinations.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, without denying that Narbonne had contributed to this alliance, we must not overrate the importance of the part he played. He contented himself with renewing, at an opportune moment, former suggestions, and conveying to his government the wishes and sentiments of the House of Austria. How-

<sup>1</sup> Rambuteau, pp. 21-24; *Mémoires du Chancelier Pasquier*, i. p. 374.

<sup>2</sup> Frédéric Masson, *L. I. Impératrice Marie-Louise*, pp. 41-43.



ever this may be, the Court of Vienna was grateful to him for the services rendered in this important circumstance, and expressed the wish of seeing him represent the Emperor of the French as ambassador. But M. de Bassano knew very little about Narbonne, and had, on the contrary, a very high opinion of Otto, who had long dealt with the German affairs. Napoleon must have consented after some hesitation, for, later on, at St Helena,<sup>1</sup> he seemed to regret his decision. He wished, at least, to make amends by bestowing on him a favour which would show the Court of Austria how much he trusted him. His idea was to send him to St Petersburg, to take the place of the Duke de Vivence.<sup>2</sup> However, as the Emperor of Russia preferred Count Lauriston, Napoleon decided to make Narbonne Grand-master of the Household of the new Empress. His connection with the nobility of the old Court, the exquisite politeness of his manners, the duties he had formerly performed in the service of Madame Adélaïde, and the unswerving devotion which he now showed towards the Emperor—all these circumstances seemed to designate Narbonne for such a post. "He was longing for it"—if we are to

<sup>1</sup> Las Cases, *Mémoires de St Hélène* (édition du Panthéon populaire), i. p. 97. Count de Golovkine, who, although he was a northerner, boasts like a true Gascon, is not afraid to say that if he had wished, he could have obtained for Narbonne the embassy in Vienna. As he was weary of Munich, Narbonne is supposed to have applied to Golovkine in order to obtain this post: "This would have been easily managed," says he, "because of the credit I enjoyed in the Austrian Cabinet and the approbation I should have met with at the Tuileries, but apparently, the right moment had not come. I put off for one day speaking to His Grace the Prince of Schwartzberg who had just arrived as Austrian ambassador, and in the interval, M. Otto was proposed to him, and he accepted him as he had no orders to mix himself up in this nomination." (*Portraits et Souvenirs*, p. 317). Thus, through sheer negligence on the part of Golovkine, Narbonne missed the post of ambassador to Vienna. One may well say: What does our Destiny depend on!

<sup>2</sup> *Correspondance de Napoleon I.*, vol. xxi. p. 477.

believe Napoleon who owned that he had committed a fault in not persisting in his design, "for," said he, "he would have done excellently in the post where a man was needed—and Narbonne was one."<sup>1</sup> He was to undertake the duties shared by the Count de Beauharnais—gentleman-in-waiting, and Prince Aldobrandini, First Equerry. These noblemen were the best people in the world—the surest and the most obedient, but, at the same time, they were most insignificant and incapable, and entirely subject to the jealous, greedy and mischief-making disposition of the lady-in-waiting—the Duchess de Montbello. Duroc wished for Narbonne's appointment, for in his absence there was no one to answer for the conduct of the Empress and her Household, as, during his long, far off campaigns, the Emperor could no longer guide her as he had done in the beginning of their married life. Who can tell whether Narbonne's influence over the young sovereign might not have affected the fate of France? "Providence did not allow it," says Rambuteau, the faithful echo of his father-in-law's views, and who, through his position as Chamberlain, had witnessed many Court intrigues. Providence did not allow it, in spite of Napoleon's desire, Duroc's councils and the approbation of the Prince of Schwartzemberg, the Austrian ambassador. But those about Marie Louise had leagued themselves together in order to put aside the man whom they considered as a chief and a dangerous rival, and not as a wise guardian for Her Imperial Majesty. In spite of her timidity, they persuaded Marie Louise to go and throw herself at her husband's feet and to beseech him to spare her this grief. In vain he insisted with gentle confidence. He did not want to compel her to accept his choice. Thereupon he sent for M. de Narbonne, and said to him, "Since the Empress won't have you, I take

<sup>1</sup> Gourgaud : *Sainte Hélène, journal inédit de 1815 à 1818*. (Edition Grouchy et Guillois), vol. ii. pp. 81-276.

you myself. Neither of us will be the worse for it. She will be the loser for having failed to appreciate you." Then he proposed to him to act as his aide-de-camp until some more important post were to be disposed of. "Narbonne," said he, "you have no fortune?" "No, Sire, I have nothing but debts." "Well, I give you two hundred thousand francs to pay them with." Before dismissing him, he spoke to him about his past career, his family, and the Duchess, his mother, saying, "She does not like me. Is it not so?" My father-in-law, who was clever at making a happy retort, replied, "No, Sire, so far she has only learnt to admire you." Commenting on these words, the same narrator makes this timely observation. "This delicate art of praising, this freedom of speech set off by politeness and respect, had died with the eighteenth century. The old society had carried away the secret. Vile flattery alone remained. This made Napoleon say, 'There is too much flattery around me. I am weary of it. Would you believe it? In order to escape being flattered, even at the bivouac, I have been obliged to take as aide-de-camp, a courtier, a witty man of the old Court.'"<sup>1</sup>

On the 24th December 1811, Louis de Narbonne entered on his new duties as aide-de-camp.<sup>2</sup> Nearly every

<sup>1</sup> Rambuteau, *ibid.*, pp. 64-66; Golovkine, *ibid.*, p. 317; Villemain, *ibid.*, p. 123; *Mémoires de Malouet*, i. p. 40 note; Fred Masson, *ibid.*, pp. 140-141 and 136; Gourgau, *ibid.*, i. p. 81. On the first occasion when Narbonne had to present a letter to the Emperor, he handed it to him on the top of his three-cornered hat, and Napoleon exclaimed: "These are the only people who know how to serve!" This mark of respect was indeed a custom of the old Court, and Narbonne was the first to apply it to the Emperor's service. The other aides-de-camp immediately followed his example. When relating the anecdote, Stendhal makes fun of the Emperor's reply, just as Madame Campan laughed at the Duchess de Noailles' *barbes pendantes* (dangling lappets) thus, these two extreme opinions met in unintelligence of Court etiquette. *Journal du Maréchal de Castellane*, i. p. 22; A. Chuquet, *Stendhal* Beyle, p. 378.

<sup>2</sup> *Administrative Arch. of the War Office*. Documents concerning



ADÉLAÏDE DE NARBONNE-LARA, COMTESSE DE RAMBUTEAU  
*By Edouard Dubufe, 1815*



evening, during the winter, the Emperor summoned him to converse with him in the Empress's apartments. Even during the night, he would often come into the drawing-room where the Count slept, and, sitting on the edge of his camp bed, would forbid him to rise, and then talk to him for a long while familiarly on all sorts of subjects.<sup>1</sup> Thus a certain intimacy sprang up between the sovereign and Narbonne. The latter displayed the talent, the longing to serve that was peculiar to his race, the admiration he felt for the Emperor's genius, and the freedom of speech that his devotedness justified. At first, some surprise mingled with the esteem which Napoleon felt for the learning and the character of this former courtier. He enjoyed eliciting from this impulsive nature the soundest and often the deepest opinions expressed in words that seemed light. He appreciated still more his extraordinary gift of penetration—essential virtue of the diplomatist—that made him divine and even forestall the thoughts of others. By disgracing Talleyrand, or making him retire, the Emperor had set him aside, but not replaced him, and he missed him, if not as a confidant, at least, as one who had shared his labour. The various interests of his immense Empire so much absorbed Napoleon that he could not always act as his own minister of Foreign Affairs, and, feeling the necessity of finding another agent as good—but more docile, as delicate, but more to be relied on, he was sounding Narbonne. They were both versed in Ancient History, and their conversations turned now

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Louis de Narbonne. The portrait reproduced in his son-in-law's *Mémoires* must be ascribed to this period. He is represented in the uniform of a General of the Empire, with the aide-de-camp's aiguillettes. According to the fashion of the eighteenth century, he bears his head very erect, and his hair, that is scanty, is combed very far back. The penetrating eyes, imperious mouth, the spited expression of his whole being, are the principal characteristics of this life-like picture.

<sup>1</sup> Rambuteau, *ibid.*, pp. 83-92.

on the Greeks and Romans, so dear to men of their generation, now on the English Revolution which Narbonne had studied more particularly. At other times, the theme would be the recent foundation of the Normal School, and the organisation of education to which Napoleon attached great importance. But, whether they talked of Cicero, of Marius, of Cromwell, of Charles II., or of the Normal School, it rarely happened that the Emperor failed to gather arguments in favour of his home and foreign policy. Then, growing more eager, and longing to captivate this opponent whom he felt to be attentive, with disorderly, but eloquent movements, he would unfold before him the gigantic vision of his dreams and plans. Narbonne took care to note down these imperial conversations, these precious secrets that history has chronicled.<sup>1</sup>

I should like to recall briefly at least one of the most memorable of these conversations, one which took place between them on the eve of the Russian campaign. When, on the 25th of December 1810, the Emperor Alexander issued the ukase by which he allowed English goods to enter Russia under neutral colours, Napoleon had been less wounded by this act of defiance towards the Continental Blockade, than by the fact that it was a prognostic of a fresh and speedy rising of the Eastern nations against the Western—of barbarism against civilization. According to a law which he believed to be periodic and inevitable, this rising would recall the invasions of the first centuries of our era. Therefore, according to his idea, it was necessary to make use of what remained of the energy which the Revolution had roused in the Southern races, and to send them to drive back the Northern nations. "Is it not in this way," said he, "that, eighteen centuries ago, Marius, the peasant of Arpinum, whom war had raised above the

<sup>1</sup> Villemain, *ibid.*, pp. 134-160.

Roman patricians, gathered together his recruits, the proletarians of Latium, his veterans, scorched by the African sun, and crushed the Northern armies twice, at Aix and at Verceil, thus, postponing for three centuries, the invasion of the Gothic races? The destruction of the Cymbrians is the foundation-stone of the Empire, and, on each occasion, under Trajan, Aurelian and Theodosius, the Empire has been steeped in the same or kindred blood. Remember Souwaroff and his Tartars in Italy! The only reply is to drive them back beyond Moscow. And when will Europe be able to do this if it is not now and through my hand?" But, whilst using as a lever the material force born of the Revolution, Napoleon intended to remain the master and to raise up Poland without emancipating it, and to liberate Western Europe without bringing back the Republican ferment. There was the problem and it reminded him of the one which Narbonne and the Constitutionalists had tried in vain to solve in 1791. He hoped to be more fortunate, as their failure had enlightened him concerning the danger of liberty and, in any case, made him less ingenuous than they had been. He admired the Poles, but only on the battle-field. As for their deliberative assemblies, he simply would not tolerate them. He would grant them a sort of diet to facilitate military levies; they might have a camp, but no Forum. He would beat Alexander with arms of courtesy; he would deprive him of Moscow and drive him back to Asia; but he would not allow any clubs either at Warsaw or anywhere else.

This was the reverse of Narbonne's idea for, being an impenitent Constitutionalist, his views were not so grand indeed, but also they were less chimerical. He did not hesitate to say so: "You should not upset Poland, but give it a national organization and, thus liberated, it would yield you two hundred thousand soldiers. Direct this regeneration, seize, by one blow, the frontiers that



Russia has usurped, plant your outposts at the extreme end of old Poland, and wait there for the enemy. If he does not come, consider that you have won a great victory in delivering an immense territory and several millions of men. This should be the object of the campaign of 1812. Prussia and Austria have been defeated at Berlin and at Vienna. Will the Emperor allow me to say this: Russia would *not* be vanquished at Moscow. Once having crossed the Niemen, he would have to struggle against the length of the march through deserted or devastated lands. All around and behind the victorious army there would be silence, hostility and barbarism." Although the Emperor could not generally brook contradiction, he listened to Narbonne's objections. Maybe he felt that they were powerful ones and realized the dangers he pictured to him. "But," said he, "where shall I find a king for Poland? There is none in my family and it would be dangerous to choose one elsewhere. It is not a kingdom like that of Naples. Another Sobieski is needed. And where shall I find him? Are you sure that I have acted wisely in allowing Bernadotte the survivorship of the crown of Sweden? No, my dear friend, it is bad policy to distribute crowns during one's lifetime. Alexander only made his generals Kings after his death and by dividing amongst them the fragments of his Empire." But, according to Narbonne's idea, it was not necessary to hunt after a king for Poland, and he rejoined: "Sire, if you raise up on the borders of the Russian Empire a nation retrieved by your own hand, and, enjoying with your protection, its own government; if you take possession of Lithuania and drive Russia back into the deserts and to Asia, will you not have accomplished enough for one campaign? What more could be gained by marching towards Moscow? By putting eight hundred leagues between you and France, you will embolden your enemies by exposing yourself

and the whole world to unforeseen chances and the fathomless whims of fortune, whereas, at present, the concentration of your forces on the Vistula and on the Niemen, in Poland thus united, armed and rebuilt, you are sheltered from all unexpected events. Your whole line of action becomes clear, consistent, and inflexible as the will of genius." But, trusting to the influence which he thought he exercised over the Emperor Alexander, Napoleon flattered himself with the idea that, by a grand display of daring and power, he would strike his imagination and disarm him. Moreover, he expected much from the Turks creating a diversion by attacking the adversary's flank. The barbarism of the Russians, the distance, the route lined with deserts affected him but little. "After all," cried he, with a sudden flash in his eye, "this long route is the way to India! In order to reach the Ganges, Alexander started from a spot as far off as Moscow. *I have said this to myself ever since St John of Acre.*" Then, looking straight at Narbonne, who was overcome with surprise, he added gravely: "Do not be mistaken, I am a Roman Emperor. I belong to the race of Caesar. The race that builds up nations. Like Diocletian, I have pacified the people by showing them my love. I have reinstated the majorats, the aristocracy, the hereditary nobility, within the shadow of the squares of the Imperial Guard, which is entirely composed of the sons of peasants, petty purchasers of national property, and mere proletarians. Like Trajan, I have vanquished in the East, and on the Rhine, and at home, I have reconstituted society by my display of moderation, which, in spite of all that is said, is the fundamental law of my government. As Trajan succeeded to Domitian, I arose amidst the recollections of terrorism, extended the State and shed a lustre over it. I have followed his traces beyond the Danube and the Vistula. But I must go further towards

the North—for there lies the danger and the future." This conversation took place at St Cloud, in the beginning of March 1812. As the carriage that was to convey Narbonne back to Paris left the courtyard of the castle, his companion saw him rest his head in his hand, like one recalling to mind all that he has just learnt, and then he heard him mutter ; " What a man ! What great ideas ! What dreams ! What parapet will rail in this Genius ? <sup>1</sup> Où est le garde fou de ce génie ? "

One month later Narbonne was travelling along the road to Berlin. His mission was to make the King of Prussia agree to the subsistence of several hundred thousands of men and to allow them to cross his dominions ; at the same time, he was to reassure the sovereign concerning the destruction of his kingdom, a design which throughout Germany was imputed to the Emperor of the French. In the beginning of May, he was sent from Berlin to Vilna, to meet the Emperor Alexander. Be it that Napoleon wished to exhaust the last chances of avoiding war, or that he simply wanted to give his troops time to reach the Niemen without striking a blow, his aide-de-camp had received instructions, to expound at great length, the terms of a possible agreement. As a soldier and an observer, he was, at the same time, to examine the men and things around him so that the staff of the French army might draw profit from the information which he would gather in the Russian headquarters. <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Villemain, *ibid.*, pp. 161-184.

<sup>2</sup> To this effect, Narbonne was the bearer of detailed instructions that may be thus summed up : " Get information about the effective forces of the troops, and the artillery, etc., about the generals in command and their personalities ; about the spirit that prevails in the army and how the inhabitants are disposed ; try to find out who has the Emperor's confidence, whether some woman has a special influence over him ; endeavour, in particular to sound the Emperor and to make acquaintances amongst those around him."

Narbonne was accompanied by Captain Sebastiani and Lieutenant de Rohan-Chabot, his aides-de-camp. As soon as the French envoys entered on the Russian territory, they were surrounded by police-agents, who, escorted them throughout their journey and watched them closely, though discreetly, noting down how they spent their time, hour by hour almost, until they saw them again safely across the frontier. After having been conducted to Vilna by roads that were chosen on purpose so that they should not be able to see the artillery parks established in this region, they reached the town on the 18th of May at nine o'clock in the morning. Although the Emperor Alexander had refused to see General Lauriston, the French ambassador at Vilna, and had ordered him to be detained in St Petersburg, he immediately granted an audience to Narbonne who presented to him a letter from the Emperor Napoleon. This letter had been written in reality on the 3rd of May, but it bore the date of the 25th April, so that it might appear to have been written before the last counter-proposals of the Russian Court had reached Paris. It ran as follows :—

“ MONSIEUR MON FRÈRE,—As I have reason to believe that your Majesty has left Saint Petersburg and that Count Lauriston is no longer with your Majesty, I entrust this letter to my aide-de-camp, Count de Narbonne. At the same time, he is the bearer of important communications for Count Roumanzov. They will prove to your Majesty how much I wish to avoid war and that I am faithful to the sentiments expressed at Tilsit and at Erfurt. Nevertheless, your Majesty will allow me to state that, should war between us become inevitable, the feelings which your Majesty has called forth in me, will be unchanged and will remain unaltered through every vicissitude.”

When the Emperor of Russia had finished reading this letter, Narbonne began explaining the object of his mission. Alexander listened to him with patient courtesy and then replied. "What does the Emperor want of me? He wants me to side with his interests and to force me to take measures that will ruin my people? And because I refuse to do what he wishes, he means to make war on me, believing that after winning two or three battles and taking several provinces or perhaps even a Capital, he will oblige me to sue for peace, the conditions of which he will dictate! He is mistaken." Then, taking an immense map of his dominions, he spread it slowly on the table and continued. "*Monsieur le Comte*, I am convinced that Napoleon is the greatest General in Europe, his troops are the most disciplined, his lieutenants the bravest and the most experienced—nevertheless, space is a barrier. If, after several defeats, I retreat, sweeping before me the population, if I let time, the desert and the climate look to my defence, then I may, perchance, get the better of the most formidable army of modern times." This reply made such an impression on Narbonne that when he returned to France he was able to repeat it word for word to the Emperor Napoleon. As soon as the audience was over he went to see the Chancellor Roumiantsev, to whom he handed a note from the Duke de Bassano, and then to Count Kotchoubey, the vice-chancellor. The police-agents who dogged their footsteps, inform us that in the course of the afternoon the three envoys took several walks through the town and received the visits of some French *émigrés* residing there, and of several Russian personages. They spent the evening in a theatre. On the following morning (the 19th of May), General Narbonne had an interview with a secret agent who first betrayed the Russians to the French, then sold Narbonne to the Russian police after having given him information that

was more or less false, concerning the Moscovite army. At half past two o'clock the General dined with the Emperor, and his aides-de-camp seated themselves at the table of Barclay de Tolly, Minister of War and Generalissimo. At seven o'clock he was again summoned to the Czar, who, although Narbonne had showed no signs of intending to depart, had already given him a box bearing his portrait richly set in diamonds, a gift which it was then the custom to bestow on ambassadors taking their leave. The haste with which the Russian government endeavoured to dismiss the French envoy is to be accounted for by the fact that on the night before, whilst Narbonne and his aides-de-camp were at the theatre, the police agents, being anxious to know whether he was entrusted with some secret mission, had not hesitated to search his luggage. After having made his servants drink freely they seized his casket and opened it in the Emperor's presence, then, taking a copy of Napoleon's secret instructions to his envoy, they put the casket back in its place. On that same day Narbonne received several spies, amongst which was the one he had seen the day before and with whom he had a long interview. On the 20th of May at a quarter to nine in the morning, riding-horses were presented to the three French officers, so that they might assist at the parade of the Grenadier regiments. Narbonne saw for the last time the Count de Choiseul-Gouffier, son of his former friend, whom he had met on the two preceding days. He made him stay to dinner. They were taking coffee when, at a quarter past five, they saw several post-horses drive up to the door whilst a major-domo presented them, in the Emperor's name, with the choicest provisions for the journey. Thus, says a historian, Napoleon's envoy was just given time to deliver his message and recite his lesson, then, with the most exquisite courtesy, he was placed in his carriage and promptly shown his way home. His

mission, which was to have lasted three months, had taken up just three days. Having left Vilna on the 20th of May, at half past six in the evening, he met Napoleon four days later at Dresden. He related his interview with the Emperor Alexander, and handed to the Duke of Bassano the reply of the Russian Chancellor, the purport of which amounted to a formal refusal of all possible agreement.<sup>1</sup> Narbonne followed Napoleon to Russia. As the French army pushed on into the land, pursuing an invisible enemy, he became convinced that the Emperor was hurrying on to a disaster, and his opinion was shared by Napoleon's wisest advisers, his surest and most devoted friends, men such as Caulaincourt, Duroc, and Daru. At each halting place on this fatal march, Narbonne had some new conversation with the Emperor. At Witepsk, following Daru's counsel, he advised him not to go any further, but Napoleon replied: "I fear it is already too late. The danger forces us on towards Moscow." At Smolensk, someone having asked Narbonne what he thought of the expedition, he replied; "I see in it the destruction of the Empire." This remark was reported to the Emperor, who recalled it later on, at St Helena. At Moscow, when Napoleon talked to him about the theatres, he retorted by speaking on politics, reminding him at the same time of Charles XII. Nevertheless, although he had lost all his illusions,

<sup>1</sup> *Correspondance de Napoléon I.*, vol. xxiii., pp. 430-432 and 452. Thiers: *Histoire du Consulat et de l'Empire*, bk. xxv. Ernout: *Maret, Duc de Bassano*, 353-363. Villemain, *ibid.*, pp. 185-188. *Journal de Maréchal de Castellane*, vol. i. p. 96. Rambuteau, *ibid.*, pp. 86-87. *Duc de Lezennec: Souvenirs Militaires*, 4th edition, p. 221. A. Vandal, *Napoléon et Alexander I.*, vol. iii. pp. 384-431. Comtesse de Choiseul-Gouffier, *Mémoires historiques sur l'Empereur Alexandre et la cour de Russie*, p. 80. Narbonne's mission has been the object of a special study which M. E. Casalas has drawn from the reports of the Russian police agents (*Feuilles d'histoire*, vol. iii. pp. 216-230). This article in which the author follows Narbonne and his aides-de-camp, step by step, completes and rectifies all previous accounts.

the old aide-de-camp set an example of the most extraordinary abnegation, endurance, and even high-spirits. When, in order to avoid obstruction, the Emperor had Narbonne's carriage burnt, and sent him one thousand napoleons and some books to compensate for this loss, the Count kept the books and distributed the money to some exhausted recruits. When they halted, he would tell amusing stories and so smooth the most anxious brows. On one occasion he was given quarters in a place already full of unfortunate creatures who had no other shelter to go to, and, rather than turn them out, Narbonne settled himself elsewhere. No circumstances could rob him of his equanimity. One day he was kicked by a horse and was thrown from his carriage, but this did not make him lose the cheerfulness that the Emperor prized so much and which often won him a place at his table. But although this highborn nobleman dropped the "de" from his name, he still remained a Marquis, amidst the mud and snow of Lithuania, as when treading on the polished floor of the Tuileries. From head to foot, he was a Marquis—a nobleman in his taste, his manners, and his language. He had not been able to banish from his veins one single drop of that blue blood that had filled them through twenty generations, and when, at the bivouac, he said to the common soldiers: "Room, messieurs, for the Emperor!"—his voice sounded like that of the First Gentleman-in-waiting, saying to the courtiers in the hall of the *Œil-de-bœuf*: "Fall back, gentlemen, here is the King!" Every morning, worthy son of his ancestors who donned all their dainty apparel to go and storm the breach, he would seat himself on the trunk of a tree or on a cannon, and have his hair powdered and dressed *à l'oiseau royal*. His colleagues, the other generals, whose fathers had perhaps driven behind, but certainly not in the King's coaches, would sometimes laugh at this living anachronism, that amused the Emperor.



also in the beginning of the campaign. However, during the retreat, when they saw him constantly reviving the waning spirits of the young officers or the sentinels dying of hunger and cold ; when they saw him distribute again amongst the Guards, every sou of the sixty-thousand francs which the Emperor had given him at Moscow ; when they saw him abandon the horses that broke down beneath him, and spring lightly on to the seat behind the Imperial berline, then, the other aides-de-camp, who had not all welcomed this aristocrat, this intruder, ceased to laugh at him : " We thought he was only fit to be an officer of the Crown "—they confessed—" we are now proud that he is our comrade." <sup>1</sup> As for the Emperor, he was willing to own that something in their blood distinguished the nobility from his own soldiers : " In the face of danger their courage is indomitable," said he, when speaking of the latter,—" but it is powerless to meet the strokes of fate that make them weak and defenceless ; your young noblemen draw from their feeling of honour and duty a strength that upholds them even when there is nothing left to hope for." It was thought that he was alluding to Count de Narbonne when in a sentence of the celebrated Twenty-ninth bulletin, he said : " Those whom Nature has made superior to all events, retained their gaiety and their usual manners." On his return Narbonne received congratulations on the subject : " Oh ! " replied he,

<sup>1</sup> Golovkine, who as we have already seen, does not spare Narbonne, says that he was nearly sixty years of age when the Emperor made him aide-de-camp : " In this position, he was at first merely an old puppet chosen to uphold traditions that were almost forgotten." But Golovkine is obliged to do homage to his conduct in Russia : " He had not been on horseback for the last twenty-five years, and the situation would have been deplorable for anyone but him ; nevertheless, in 1812, during the disastrous flight from Russia, he bore it so well that he was about the only one who kept the appearance of a human being and the necessary courage of mind to show the Emperor how much it was wanting in him and in all the others" (*Portraits et Souvenirs*, p. 318).

bitterly, "The Emperor may say all he pleases, but *gaiety* is rather too strong a word." <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Journal du Maréchal de Castellane*, vol. i. pp. 99, 102, 105, 145, 157, 206; Rambuteau, *ibid.*, pp. 89-90; Villemain, *ibid.*, pp. 210, 217, 225, 230, 250; Gourgaud, *ibid.*, p. 82; *Moniteur*, 20th December, 1812; Fezensac, *ibid.*, p. 239.

## CHAPTER XVI

NARBONNE AS A THEOLOGIAN AND A DIPLOMATIST—HIS DEATH

**N**ARBONNE reached Paris on 18th January 1813, one month after the Emperor, whom he had left on the way in order to fulfil a mission in Prussia and in Saxony. In Berlin he had assisted at the reading of the report announcing the defection of two Prussian armies, and he had felt that beneath the official indignation of the Court, the smouldering hatred against France was ready to burst forth in Prussia and throughout the whole of Germany. On his return he was immediately summoned to Fontainebleau to give an account of his mission, and, at the same time, to express his views on the religious difficulties which threatened to begin once more on account of the new Concordat, that had been signed recently. Thus, after having employed Narbonne as a soldier and as a diplomatist, Napoleon now appealed to him as a theologian. When the Count presented himself, the Emperor was in a great state of excitement. With passionate words he spoke of his quarrels with the Pope and ended by saying: "I have had enough of it! If he will not listen to reason let him keep his religion. I will arrange mine with my own clergy."

"Don't think of such a thing, Sire," replied Narbonne, "We have not enough religion in France to make up two." This sally pacified the Emperor. He requested his aide-de-camp to draw up a memorandum on the principal litigious question of the moment, which consisted in the article of the Concordat of 1813, by which

it was stipulated that every nomination to a see made by the Emperor, must be ratified by the Pope within six months; this delay being elapsed the consecration was to be performed by the metropolitan or the oldest bishop of the province. Narbonne consulted M. de Fontanes. Although the Count and the great master of the University were Voltairians, they were both of the opinion that "religious questions are most serious, most dangerous, and most fatal to those who make a mistake."

The Emperor often quoted Bossuet, using his words as a weapon against the Pope, but the great Bishop had dreamt of a powerful monarchy and a free religion—not such a one as Napoleon was endeavouring to establish, tied down by the rule of his despotic government. In his memorandum Narbonne concluded that the Pope must be referred to unconditionally, and maintain his right of investiture.<sup>1</sup> When he presented his notes to the Emperor, he commented on them for a long while, and eventually Napoleon's conviction seemed to be shaken: "He has begun to doubt. That is a great step! But shall we have time to win our suit!"

Whilst they were busy discussing theology at Fontainebleau, a new coalition against France was being formed beyond the Rhine. With the help of English gold, the Russians made a treaty with Prussia and Sweden, at the same time working on Austria and the Secondary States of Germany. Metternich proclaimed loudly to Count Otto, our ambassador, that the alliance between the courts of Vienna and Paris was as natural as it was indestructible, but, at the same time, in the utmost secrecy, he was negotiating with Russia, Prussia, Saxony and Bavaria, in order to free himself from these ties and make new ones. Napoleon felt intuitively that these underhand

<sup>1</sup> *Castellane*, vol. i. p. 122; *Villemain*, pp. 242-275; *Rambuteau*, p. 89; *Correspondance de Napoléon*, vol. xxiv. pp. 391 and 409.

intrigues were going on, and, as it was most important for him to ascertain the exact truth in order to thwart their designs—if not too late—he decided to recall Otto.

The latter was a judicious and unassuming diplomatist, but Napoleon considered him to be wanting in influence and perspicacity, and preferred to put in his place a more subtle and craftier agent. In the beginning of 1811, there had been some question of appointing Narbonne to this post; in the present emergency Napoleon thought he would meet his views, and on 7th March, despatched him in all haste to Vienna. Narbonne started with the saddest misgivings. He is supposed to have said to his son-in-law: "They are sending me out there now that it is too late, like some people call for the quack when the sick man is in his agony. Two years ago I could have done much good, now I am powerless to avert the evil." Nevertheless, nothing was spared in order to make him represent his Emperor in the most magnificent way. Napoleon desired him to have the largest and most sumptuous house in Vienna. He ordered twenty-four grand liveries and twenty-four small liveries to be prepared with the Count's former colours—red upon red. Twelve footmen and butlers were appointed to his service and he was given new silver plate for forty guests. Narbonne, himself, spent money without counting. What did it matter to him if he made debts? When entrusting him with this important mission had not the Emperor said, "On your return, I will make you Duke and I will bestow on you the grand endowment."<sup>1</sup>

Although, as we have just seen, Narbonne did not conceal from himself the difficulties of his new post, he threw himself into the task with all the ardour that was in his nature, wishing to give his master a striking proof of his devotedness in return for the confidence he placed

<sup>1</sup> *Rambuteau*, p. 93; *Castellana*, vol. i. pp. 222-226.

in him, and firmly resolved not to let himself be deceived as his predecessor had been, for he was convinced that the fate of the Empire depended on the success of his mission. His interviews with Metternich, his connection with the German aristocracy, the reports of his numerous emissaries, and even his walks through the streets of Vienna, soon revealed to him the real state of affairs. He saw that Austria was deliberately transforming into a mere nominal alliance her treaty of military co-operation with France and that she wished to become neutral. She was willing to proffer her armed mediation until Napoleon's defeat would allow her to join the enemy openly. Las Cases relates that one day, at St Helena, Napoleon spoke with these words concerning Narbonne's mission in Austria :—" Up to the time of his appointment as ambassador we had been duped by Austria. In less than a fortnight, M. de Narbonne discovered her plans and M. de Metternich was much embarrassed by his nomination. And yet how strange is fatality! Perhaps M. de Narbonne's success caused my ruin, and, most certainly, his talents did me more harm than good, for, believing that she had been found out, Austria threw aside her mask and hastened to take hostile measures. If we had shown less perspicacity she would have followed for some time her natural course of indecision and, during this delay, other chances might have arisen." <sup>1</sup>

This is an opinion expressed when the Emperor was at St Helena, and we know that the fallen sovereign was inclined to blame others for his ruin and his mistakes. After having been for a long time ignorant of Narbonne's worth, in a few years Napoleon made up for lost time. He knew now that the qualities wherewith he was endowed were precisely those needed to accomplish the work he was about to give him. He was in such a hurry to be

<sup>1</sup> *Mémoires de Sainte-Hélène*, 21st April, 1816, p. 97.

informed of the secret designs of Austria and so entirely did he depend on Narbonne to discover them, that he despatched him to Vienna without even waiting for the arrival in Paris of Schwartzberg, bearer of the proposals of his government. If he wished his new ambassador to show less perspicacity, why did he not maintain Otto? Narbonne may have been too clear-sighted and enterprising in Vienna, but, in this respect, he could not exceed his master's wishes. He had been sent, not only to discover the plans of Austria, but also to impose on her those of France. Now, as a matter of fact, his instructions which had been drawn up by the Duke de Bassano in an overbearing tone that made them all the more injudicious and rash, consisted in telling Austria that she must undertake the principal part in the conflict. Since she wished for peace she must make herself able to impose it by a display of great forces that would intimidate the belligerent powers and hold them in check in the flank, whilst the French would attack them in the front. On the one hand, by giving the preponderating part to Austria, Napoleon was using her as his instrument, whereas she was no longer willing and, in fact, could not be his ally, because she was negotiating with his enemies; on the other hand he was thus encouraging her to prepare forces which she was soon to turn against him. It was a great mistake, and, in this respect, Napoleon was not wrong in what he said at St Helena. But this error cannot be imputed to Narbonne, for he was deliberately chosen to execute his master's orders because he was likely to fulfil them with more alacrity and thoroughness than anyone else. The responsibility remains with the one who sent him.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Correspondance de Napoléon*, vol. xxv. pp. 194, 324, 343; *Mémoires du Prince de Metternich*, vol. i. pp. 150, 159; *Villemain*, ch. xxiv; *Rambuteau*, p. 117; *Ernouf: Maret, Duc de Bassano*, pp. 511, 560; *Thiers: Histoire du Consulat et de l'Empire*, vol. xxix. and xxx.

It will be remembered that, after the battles of Lutzen (2nd May), Bautzen and Wurtschen, which brought the Emperor Napoleon before the gates of Breslau, Austria interposed on 5th June, and obtained an armistice of thirty-five days, proposing at the same time a congress at Prague, where the belligerents could endeavour to come to an understanding concerning the conditions of peace. Napoleon acquiesced, either because he wanted to gain time to complete his military preparations or because he really wished to end the war. He appointed the Count de Narbonne and Caulaincourt, Duke de Vicence to represent him at the congress. The two French plenipotentiaries were most anxious that their sovereign should accept the proposals that were made to him. He was asked to give up the Illyrian provinces, the Grand-Duchy of Warsaw, Danzig, Hamburg, Lubeck, and the protectorate of the Rhenish Confederation. He would have kept Belgium, Holland, Italy, and the left bank of the Rhine. Jointly or separately, they besought him to give way. Narbonne in particular was most earnest : "Sire," said he, "France has given you her last man, and her last farthing. True, you have thirty thousand horsemen, but still you have no real cavalry ; your staff is full of recruits who are, indeed, brave fellows, but who are not inured to warfare, and, who, although they may win a battle, are unfit to stand the hardships of a retreat or a defeat. Two hundred thousand of your best soldiers are prisoners or scattered about in far-off fortresses. At the first repulse you will be undone, and France will be ruined, for all Europe is now against us. Peace, even if it is but a truce, will save us. Make it for two years only. By that time, you will have gathered together all the elements of your strength, we shall be able to make a breach between our enemies, and you will try your fortune once more. At present you have no other means of securing the happiness or even the salva-



tion of France. Peace is absolutely necessary and my devotedness, my fidelity to your person, throw me at the feet of Your Majesty."

Nevertheless, Napoleon had come to no decision when, on 10th August, after having been prolonged several times, the close of the armistice was announced.

On the following day, he at length sent in his counter-proposals. He consented to give up the Grand-Duchy of Warsaw on the condition that the King of Prussia would renounce, in favour of Saxony, to a whole portion of his dominions situated to the west of the Oder. Berlin was hereby included and these conditions appeared unacceptable.

The Congress was given up before it had even assembled. Austria proclaimed her adhesion to the Coalition and Narbonne received his passports (12th August). Hostilities began immediately.<sup>1</sup>

Napoleon appointed the Count de Narbonne military governor of Torgau. By this nomination the Emperor intended either to punish him for having failed at Vienna and at Prague, or else he wanted to have a negotiator at hand, if circumstances called for one. The stronghold which lay on the left bank of the Elbe, about sixty miles north of Dresden, was one of those fortresses that Napoleon had left behind full of troops which he had not had time to rally, as he fell back on Leipzig after the battle of

<sup>1</sup> *Correspondance de Napoléon*, vol. xxv. p. 569; vol. xxvi. pp. 4-6; *Metternich*, p. 160; *Rambuteau*, pp. 117-120. "A sum of twenty-five millions had been placed in Torgau," says Golovkine, "and, knowing that he would depend on M. de Narbonne's integrity where money was concerned, and on his conscience when it was a question of honour, the Emperor entrusted him with the command of this stronghold which was of double importance." (*Souvenirs et Portraits*, p. 319.) There was so little money in the pay-office at Torgau that on 9th October Napoleon was obliged to send three or four hundred thousand francs. Therefore the only thing to be noticed in Golovkine's report is that it is a tribute paid to the honour and integrity of Narbonne by a personal enemy.

Dresden. The garrison counted fifteen thousand men, but their number soon reached twenty-six thousand, as stragglers, fugitives and detachments cut off from their regiment, sought shelter in the fortress. Many of them had neither weapons nor clothing; many were wounded or exhausted by the hardships suffered during the war. There were also many strangers—Saxons, Hessians and Wurtemburghers, who were ready to desert at any moment. The magazines were amply provided with powder and shot, but there was not a sufficient supply of food, equipments and provisions.<sup>1</sup> In spite of all his energy, Narbonne at first felt somewhat

<sup>1</sup> He made a mistake perhaps in speaking with too much frankness to his old friend, a major-general who imprudently showed his letters to the Emperor. Napoleon ordered the Duke de Bassano, who was still at Dresden, to give a sound rating to the governor of Torgau. His letter which is here produced shows how very unwelcome were the disagreeable facts his lieutenants were then constantly pointing out to him. "*Monsieur le Duc de Bassano!* You are to reply to the Count de Narbonne that his letters are ridiculous and prove but one thing, namely, that he is ignorant of all that concerns warfare. Is it indeed extraordinary that there should be some disorder in a stronghold which has just sheltered an army that had lost a battle? Is it extraordinary that there should be some confusion when fourteen or fifteen depots have to be established? He has been sent there with superior authority expressly because there is something to be done. Tell him to use more sensible expressions in his letters than his protestations of speaking the truth, for instance. As if everybody should not speak the truth and does not do so! As if everybody who has any experience of affairs would doubt it! Such protestations of speaking the truth would almost make one believe that he is not always in the habit of doing so. Try to find some polite way of making him understand all this; but really he writes to the Major-General in the most ridiculous fashion—as though there were some merit in writing truthfully! He need not be surprised at what he sees; let him speak about it with simplicity and a remedy will be found. The army of the Prince de la Moskova will eventually go elsewhere; the enemy will be far from the right bank; the Artillery-General will send arms, Count Daru will send wearing apparel; clothes will be sent from all sides. The depots will be provided with arms and clothes. It is a disagreeable moment to be gone through and it will be of use for it will have given him some knowledge of military affairs, (Pirna, 19th September 1813.)

discouraged as he found himself in the midst of want and confusion at the head of this band of enfeebled and demoralised men. However, provisions, arms and money soon poured in, and his energy got the upper hand. He first busied himself with re-organizing his troops by forming them, provisionally, into regiments that could, if necessary, reinforce Gouvion de St Cyr's troops which Napoleon, thinking he might use them in the rear of the Bohemian army, had left at Dresden. The junction of these two forces would have formed an army of forty-five to fifty thousand men that could have overthrown any obstacle between Torgau and Magdeburg.

Although the Emperor had not absolutely commanded this manœuvre, yet it may be said it would have altered the issue of the Battle of Leipzig, and Gouvion de St Cyr was obliged to capitulate on 9th November for no other reason but that he had failed to execute this move. At the same time Narbonne made the place ready to offer a serious resistance to the enemy, and in this task he was helped by General Bernard, one of the finest officers of the engineer corps of the day, who was detained at Torgau on account of a wound he had received. But a terrible enemy had made its appearance in the stronghold. Typhoid fever had broken out. Six thousand sick men were sent from Dresden to increase the numbers at Torgau.

On 9th October the Emperor wrote to the Governor, saying: "It means additional trouble. Manage as best you can. See to everything! The wounded and sick will recover."

Alas! In September the epidemic carried off twelve hundred men and four thousand nine hundred in October. The whole town was soon turned into a hospital. There were not enough healthy arms to bury the dead, and the houses were full of corpses that helped to spread the fatal

malady. Seventeen thousand men died. In this forsaken post, that was rendered more dangerous by the raging fever, with no possibility of communicating with the outer world and no news save that of the most terrible disasters, Narbonne fought on with the same untiring energy and winning courage that he had displayed the year before during the retreat from Russia. Day and night he was seen on the entrenchments inspecting the works, or in the barracks urging on the formation of new regiments, or visiting the infirmaries to cheer up the sick and wounded who worshipped him. He was already attacked with the fever when, whilst passing in review one of the provisional regiments, he fell from his horse and was obliged to take to his bed. He never rose again. On 17th November 1813, at nine o'clock in the morning, he died, being only fifty-eight years of age.<sup>1</sup> Such was the end of a man in whom were combined by a happy chance and to an eminent degree the perfect courtesy of the old Court, the lofty sentiments of a great liberal nobleman, the brilliancy of a cultured mind, the shrewdness of a diplomatist, the talents of an administrator and the courage of a warrior. Such talents should have made him one of the most useful—perhaps even one of the most glorious men of his time; but through a number of circumstances that were not all fortuitous, he is merely one of the most interesting characters of the day. His career had hardly begun when it was interrupted by the Terror. Seventeen years later a new course seemed to open before him, but he was cut down by death. If

<sup>1</sup> Arch. of the War Office (death certificate of Louis de Narbonne). *Correspondance de Napoleon*, vol. xxvi. pp. 259 and 365. Thiers, book xxxii. §Castellane, vol. i. p. 240. Villemain, p. 381. Rambuteau, pp. 117-120. Three weeks later the contagion reached Mayence and carried away another one of Napoleon's servants. His past had been very different to that of Narbonne. I am referring to Jeanbon Saint André, prefect of Mont-Tonnerre and former member of the National Convention. He died of typhoid fever on 10th December 1813.

he had survived after the Empire it is doubtful that the restored Monarchy would have forgiven his devotedness to Napoleon. All the fairies save one had been invited to his baptism, and the forgotten one rendered almost useless the many gifts showered on him by her sisters.

## CHAPTER XVII

### LAST YEARS OF THE DUCHESS OF NARBONNE

THE news of Narbonne's death reached the Emperor towards the beginning of December and it affected him deeply. Although he was overwhelmed with work and anxiety at the time and had himself suffered much from losses of the same nature, his thoughts went at once towards the mother and widow of the deceased officer to whom he despatched General Flahaut to inquire into their wants. When he learnt that their means of subsistence consisted mainly in the 24,000 francs which Count Louis gave them out of his salary,<sup>1</sup> he immediately made a decree granting a pension of 18,000 francs to the mother and six thousand to the widow.<sup>2</sup> But the Restoration would not undertake the burden of Imperial gratitude, although it was at the same time the King's. The latter forgot that the old Duchess had always been hostile to the Empire and had remained faithful to the monarchy which she had served for fifty years; he remembered but the one fact that her son had joined the usurper and had met his death whilst defending his cause. Narbonne had foreseen this and on one occasion he said to his son-in-law, "Rambuteau, thou art my adopted son, and all through thy life it will do thee

<sup>1</sup> It is known how generous Narbonne was. At Torgau he had absolutely stripped himself in order to alleviate the misery that surrounded him, and, after his death, his carriages and horses had to be sold to meet the expenses of his funeral.\*

<sup>2</sup> The minute of this decree bears corrections in the Emperor's own handwriting.

more harm than good. Remember that party hatred never forgets or forgives." When he started for Torgau that was to be his last post, he seemed to have a presentiment of coming misfortune, for he wrote to his son-in-law and took leave of him, thanking him for having been such a dutiful son and, at the same time, putting his aged mother under his protection. The Duchess de Narbonne was then eighty years of age. As though he had been her own son, and in spite of many difficulties, the Count de Rambuteau fulfilled with zeal and devotedness the mission his father-in-law had entrusted him with. He counted on the influence of Abbé de Montesquiou, Minister for the Home Department, to get the King to grant the pension that had been withdrawn from the Duchess. \* This abbé, who was the son of one of the sisters of the Duke de Narbonne, had been brought up by the Duchess and therefore owed her a debt of gratitude. However, he declared that he had made every possible effort by appealing to the King and the Duke d'Artois, but that the memory of the son made it useless to intercede for the mother. He was not telling the whole truth for Louis XVIII. had sent one thousand francs to the Duchess. She, however, returned the note, saying that the King had, no doubt, wished to give alms to the poor of the parish and that some mistake must have been made in addressing the missive. On his return from Elba the Emperor found time to remember Madame de Narbonne. As early as 23rd March 1815, Bertrand, the Grand Marshal, was sent to inquire whether her pension had been maintained. When he heard that she had never received any part of it, the Emperor immediately ordered it to be paid to her. The second return of the Bourbons again frustrated this act of liberality. The Duchess then decided to sell the lots of La Bove and Juvincourt that had not been alienated during the Revolution; this sale produced 110,000 francs. Two years later she made



COUNT DE RAMBUTEAU, LIEUT. OF EMASOL, LIEUT. OF THE  
SEINE, MEMBER OF THE INSPECTOR





over to her grand-daughters the bare ownership of a sum of 55,000 francs that remained due on the price of this transaction. But the Count de Rambuteau would not be baffled by the indolence and ill-will of Abbé de Montesquiou. Parliament having granted twenty-five millions to cover the debts incurred by the Princes during their emigration, he conceived the idea of counting as such the pension due to Madame de Narbonne. He turned into account the years spent by the Duchess with Madame Adélaïde at Rome, Naples and Trieste, during which she had neither received her salary as lady-in-waiting nor recovered the advances she had made to her mistress ; indeed Louis XVIII. had even claimed all the belongings which this Princess had bequeathed to Madame de Narbonne. In his eyes this was a real princely debt. Abbé de Montesquiou persisted in thinking the cause a hopeless one. However, with the help of the Secretary of the Commission charged with the distribution of the sum voted, Rambuteau obtained the reimbursement of 180,000 francs and an annuity of 9,000 francs drawn on the Great Book. Thus he succeeded in providing for the venerable relation bequeathed to him by his father-in-law.<sup>1</sup>

It would seem that, in spite of her great age, the Duchess de Narbonne was reluctant to follow in the tomb the many loved ones that had gone before her. The fondest wish of her heart was to be able to fulfil what she considered to be her duty—the last duty—of the heroic lady-in-waiting. She longed to bring the remains of Mesdames from the foreign land where they still rested and to see them placed with those of the Royal family in the vault at St Denis. We shall remember that, on their arrival in Trieste, the daughters of Louis XV. had received hospitality in the

<sup>1</sup> *Arch. Nat.*, A. F. iv., 6701, Nos. 42-43 (Minutes of the decrees). *Mémoires du Baron Fain*, p. 298. *Arch. of the War Office*. Rambuteau, pp. 117-120, 201-203. Th. Courtaux, *Notice sur La Bove*, p. 73.

house of the Spanish Consul, Charles Alexandre de Lellis. Here they died one after the other, and their host attended to all the details connected with their burial. To him Madame de Narbonne applied for help in winding up their inheritance. In 1814, when Louis XVIII. ascended the throne, this Spanish Consul was still at Trieste (or else had been again appointed to this post). We do not possess the correspondence that must have taken place between him and the Duchess, but it seems likely that it was at her instigation that he wrote to the King on 31st August begging for the favour of bringing the remains of Mesdames back to France. In this circumstance, at least, the Princes of the Restoration seem to have been guided by a delicate and patriotic feeling, for this mission was given, not to the Spanish Consul, but to Madame Victoire's chaplain, Abbé de La Tour, who had been appointed to the see of Moulins. The remains of the Princesses were brought to Toulon in the month of January 1815, on a boat hung with black. They were received with great pomp by the civil and military authorities who escorted them to the Church Majeure Notre-Dame, where the clergy held a solemn service in their honour. The coffins were then placed in a chapel until the King should order their removal to Saint Denis. But before Louis XVIII. had time to make his intentions known, Napoleon landed at Fréjus. We are aware of the disturbances that took place in the south of France, and more particularly at Marseilles and Toulon, during the Hundred Days. The remains of Mesdames were still exposed in the chapel that had been reserved for them and, as though even in death these unfortunate Princesses were to suffer from the consequences of the revolutions that shook their country, their bodies were hastily removed to a more secluded part of the Church. At the same time the local authorities applied to the new government for instructions. In Paris, Bigot de Préaménau who had

resumed his functions as Minister of Public Worship, and Carnot, Minister for the Home Department, were both equally embarrassed. They referred the matter to the Emperor who decreed that the bodies should be left at *Aix (sic)* "in the spot where they had been placed." The Battle of Waterloo that cut more than one Gordian knot, served also to solve the difficulty of giving a resting-place to the Princesses; had this event not taken place there is no saying what would have been the fate of their corpses that had been exhumed, bereft of a tomb and finally consigned to a dark corner in the sacristy, like packages forgotten at a station. Nevertheless, eighteen months again elapsed before the King decided to order the remains of his aunts to be transferred to their final destination. On 4th January 1817 they were eventually entrusted to the Bishop of Moulins who was to bring them to Paris. All along the road special honours were paid to the funeral train which reached St Denis on 20th January, shortly before six in the evening. At the great entrance to the abbey the bodies were met by the Marquis de Dreux-Brézé, Grand Master of the Ceremonies, the Count de Pradel, governor of the King's Household, the prefect of the Seine, the sub-prefect of Saint Denis, and other local authorities. On the same day, at nine o'clock, the funeral service was held. The vast basilica was hung with black. Twenty-four great chandeliers and several girandoles, placed symmetrically, shed their light through the nave. The catafalco, covered with a white pall over which a black veil had been thrown, was adorned with a mantle *à la royale*. Sixty candelabums surrounded it. The Bishop of Moulins who officiated was assisted by four canons of the Chapter. No funeral oration was made. The ladies and gentlemen who had formerly belonged to Mesdames' households had been invited to the ceremony, and, according to their rank and dignity, places had been reserved for them around

the catafalco—a last and striking tribute paid to an order of things that time and events had changed so cruelly.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, although they may not have recognised each other, many of Mesdames' servants met again after twenty-five years of separation. Perhaps, for one moment, hands that Napoleon had disjoined for ever, met once more in a fervent clasp; but Death, indifference or ingratitude, left many vacant places. The accounts inserted in the gazettes of the day are so very laconic that we cannot ascertain whether, in spite of her great age and the late hour at which the ceremony was held, the Duchess de Narbonne assisted at the funeral service. It was the last time that she could be near the Princess with whom she had lived for forty years and from whose tomb she had been dragged away with difficulty. We may therefore feel sure that she did her utmost in order to fulfil this duty. Madame Adélaïde and Count Louis had filled her life, and, during that dismal evening, they must have occupied all her thoughts. Their memory must also have accompanied her during the long and empty hours of her last years. The belated survivor of three or four generations, the contemporary of men who had served Louis XIV., she had lived through thirty years of the reign of Louis XV. and the whole of that of Louis XVI. At a time when long journeys were rare and difficult to accomplish, she had, as a young woman, crossed the Alps and exiled herself at the dreary Court of Parma where she purchased at a high price the few years of happiness which Madame Adélaïde's friendship bestowed on her. What jealousy and calumnies this friendship must have raised up around her! How short those bright years must have seemed to her when she looked back, after the Revolution had driven her out of

<sup>1</sup> The Dowager Duchess of Orleans, and the Duchess of Bourbon, were the only representatives of the Royal Family.

France and made her one of the most miserable creatures on the face of the earth ! Her own personal misfortunes were increased by those that fell on her relations and her caste—the sphere beyond which she deemed it impossible to live. The knife of the guillotine had cut down the King of France, the Queen, the Princesses, the flower of the nobility. She lost and found again, only to lose for ever, her favourite son, the pride and hope of her life. After witnessing Robespierre, the Terror and the Directory, she endured Bonaparte's rule. She saw his power rise and spread over the world, then disappear like a fading meteor.

Treated with indifference by a world she chose to ignore, she was alone, facing death, who after having robbed her of all she loved, seemed now to have forgotten her. Thus she outlived herself, in a small apartment, situated No. 32 rue Basse-du-Rempart, and here she died, at length, on 7th July 1821, at the age of eighty-seven.<sup>1</sup>

It is stated, that one day, towards the beginning of the July Monarchy, the Duke de Montmorency-Luxembourg wound up, by the following words, a political conversation which he had been having—"As for me, I congratulate myself that I am a bachelor and that I shall die without issue. There is no room for us in the new society. We have served our time ; the world has no longer need of us."

For some time after the death of the Duchess de Narbonne, princes and princesses in France still had their households and their ladies and gentlemen-in-waiting, but it was an anachronism, a theatrical and somewhat artificial display of an order of things overthrown by the Revolution. Like actors and actresses

<sup>1</sup> *Arch. Nat.*, O<sup>3</sup>, 613 ; F<sup>7</sup>, 3783 ; F<sup>119</sup>, 317 ; Chastellux : *Relation du voyage de Mesdames*, Jan. 1903, No. 198 ; *Moniteur*, 22nd-24th Jan. 1817 ; *Departmental Arch. of the Seine* (death certificate of the Duchess de Narbonne).

who were more or less skilful, they endeavoured to play their parts—for their service was no longer the essential occupation of their lives—it was merely a rôle they played. The days for ladies-in-waiting were past, and, on her death-bed, Madame de Narbonne might have said, "I was the last. The world has no longer any need of me."

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**TALLEYRAND PÉRIGORD** (Ch. M. de), Prince of Benevento, Madame de Flahaut's lover, p. 64, note 2; emigrates to Norbury, p. 211; uses his influence to get Louis de Narbonne's name off the list of emigrants, p. 227; does him an ill turn with Napoleon, p. 234, etc.

**TNGRY** (Prince de), Captain of the Guards, p. 111.

**TOLENTINO**, Treaty of, p. 199.

**TORGAV**, Saxon stronghold, put under authority of Louis de Narbonne, typhoid fever breaks out, p. 276.

**TOULON**, Mesdames' remains are deposited in this city, p. 284.

**TRIESTE**, town in Austria, Mesdames of France seek refuge there, p. 208; they die there, p. 208.

**TRUEL DE LA MOTTE**. See La Motte (de).

## V

**VALDECK DE LESSART**. See Lessart (de).

**VALENTINOIS** (Countess de), friend of Madame du Barry, p. 41.

**VARANCHAN**, farmer-general, lends money to Madame Adélaïde, p. 106.

**VAURÉ** (de), Bishop of Rennes, Ambassador to Spain, p. 19, note 2.

**VERGENNES** (Count de) minister, allows Louis de Narbonne to work in his offices, p. 62.

**VERMOND** (Abbé de), spy to Mercy-Argenteau, p. 31; jealous of the two Abbés de Narbonne, p. 52.

**VICENCE** (Duke de). See Caulaincourt.

**VICTOIRE DE FRANCE**, daughter of Louis XV., led by her sister, Madame Adélaïde, p. 131; has a cancer in the breast, p. 202, note 2; her condition grows worse, p. 203; dies at Trieste, p. 208.

**IGÉE IEBRUN** (Madame), artist, supposed to have painted a portrait of Countess Louis de Narbonne, p. 83.

**VILNA**, headquarters of Russian army, Louis de Narbonne is sent there on a mission, p. 262.

**VIRIEU** (François Henri, Count de), hastens Mesdames' departure, p. 132, note 1.









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